This is Chapter 160-169 of the English Translation of the Japanese Web Novel Arifureta Shokugyou de Sekai Saikyou.

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Chapter 160-At Nostalgic Orcus (Beginning)

Inside the darkness, there was a silhouette standing quietly.

The place was a large space made from stone that felt smooth like marble with several thick pillars inside. It had a solemn atmosphere like a shrine somewhere. For a light source, there was only the faint glimmer from the green light stone that shone through the door of the room before this place.

That light cut through the dark and stretched into the room like a single path, illuminating the back of the standing silhouette.

Suddenly, a new shadow piled up on that back. The slender silhouette came from a female, a voice that was clear and beautiful even while it sounded hesitant it called to the back.

"…Hajime-kun."

The standing silhouette——Hajime turned around just a little toward that voice which called his name.

"Kaori. The harvesting is over already?"

"Yes. It's quick thanks to the compass, see. The monsters too…as expected, it's cheating with the spec of the apostle, isn't it?"

Kaori showed a wry smile, perhaps from recalling the time of hardship when she was exploring the surface level of the Orcus Great Labyrinth with her classmates. And then, in consideration so that she wouldn't break the atmosphere, she entered into the hall quietly.

"…This place is, where you met with Yue, isn't it?"

Kaori whispered that while standing beside Hajime. The place Hajime's gaze was fixed at was——a half melted broken lump of mineral.

Hajime quietly nodded. His eyes were clear like a spring deep inside a forest filled to the brim with tranquility. It was the exact opposite of the empty eyes saturated with negative emotions of fury and hatred before. His gaze now was saturated with affection and pain.

“When I saw her for the first time, I thought it was a horror scene. Inside pitch black darkness, crimson eyes were peeking out from behind a weeping willow made of gold threads…something like that. Even when Yue called with a voice asking for help, I tried to close the door, you know? This fellow is absolutely a no-good person. That was what I thought.”

“Fufu. Certainly, it’s unthinkable that in the depth of the abyss like this place there would be something like a normal girl.”

“Right? Especially at that time. My mental state held no interest for anything other than survival. Now, when I recall that time, I’m thinking, really, why did I help her, huh?”

Kaori let out a chuckle at the way Hajime talked. Hajime too squinted nostalgically while making a fond smile.

“And now that girl is someone special that can make me go mad. Really, this thoroughly teaches me that we won’t know how life will it turned out in the future.”

“No truer words than that.”

Their words cut off, both of them closed their eyes for a bit. Hajime thought about his beloved lover. Kaori thought about her love rival (close friend). And then, almost at the same time, their eyes opened quietly. A flame of resolve was dwelling there.

“We will surely take her back, won’t we?”

“Yeah. We will take her back for sure.”

Hajime and Kaori looked at each other’s face and both of them made fearless smiles.

But right after that, as though there was something he forgot to say, Hajime’s face went ‘hah’ and he opened his mouth.

“Ah, but Kaori, you will remain behind with the surface group at the fight, okay?”

“Eh? Why…aa, by any chance, is it about this body stopped functioning?”

“Yeah. For the time being, I prepared an artifact for countermeasure, but as expected in front of Ehito, I don’t know how much effect it will have. After all, originally that body is that guy’s creation.”

Kaori’s expression turned bitter.

Indeed, the apostle body was something created by Ehito’s side. At the devil king castle, Ehito stopped Kaori’s body from functioning. It was doubtful whether they could completely defend against that. On the other hand, if Kaori returned to her original body, it would be a great decrease in her battle strength.

And so, the role of dealing with the apostles that would come invading the surface was best for Kaori.

However, even Kaori wanted to go to save Yue. Even though she understood that logically she should stay behind, emotionally she was unable to really accept it. “Muu” Kaori pouted her lips, to that Hajime shrugged while giving her words to persuade her.

“Don’t make that face. Even if we take back Yue, if the others ended up dead, putting me aside, it will be hard to endure for Kaori and others, right? Also about Myuu and Remia, the plan is for them to remain here in the surface hiding at the deepest part of Orcus. It had been proved once that they are effective as a hostage, so it is necessary for someone to protect them here just in case.”

“…Haa, it can’t be helped, isn’t it? It’s vexing, but I don’t want to become a burden. Besides, there are also a lot of people I don’t want to die so…yep, I understand. I will protect the place where Hajime-kun and the others will go home too. I also won’t let anyone lay their hand on Myuu-chan and Remia-san. Also, Ai-chan-sensei and Lily too, right!? Right-!?”

“Why are you emphasizing those two…”

Hajime smiled wryly at Kaori who was staring fixedly with puffed up cheeks. To such a Hajime, Kaori turned her face aside with a huff and let out a sulking voice.

“’Aiko, Lily, please’ Even though you said something like that. Hajime-kun is a womanizer.”

“No, that’s because I read the mood…”

“The other classmates too, several of them were sending you feverish gazes, you know? Saying something like Don Juan or Casanova, I think that even if Hajime-kun is called that, you really cannot deny it, I’ll tattle at Yue when she returns. Even though, I too am still stopping at an ‘important’ stage, but other girls one after another…uu, Yue whose position is immovable is enviable.”

“…”

Kaori was acting with timidity that seemed forced. Hajime scratched his cheek seeing that. That wasn’t because he was exasperated with Kaori’s attitude, it was because a feeling that denied a part of her words was naturally welling up in him.

Hajime crouched down in front of the mineral that sealed Yue before, the mineral which had the property where it was difficult for magic power to flow in it. He lifted his hand while addressing Kaori.

“The punch at that time. That was quite effective you know. That attack really opened my eyes.”

“He? …Ah, that’s, err, it hurt, wasn’t it? I did that quite with my full power…”

Kaori’s eyes turned round for a moment from the sudden change of topic, but when she noticed that Hajime was talking about her punch when he was running wild in the audience hall, her expression turned awkward and she averted her gaze.

Hajime used his refined magic power which shined vividly incomparable with the time when he undid the seal of Yue with difficulty. This time the sealing stone was permeated by his magic power unexpectedly easily.

This mineral left behind in this place was because of its abnormally bad rate of magic power permeation. On top of that, it even repelled back magic power. It caused him to be uneasy whether it could be put inside the ‘Treasure Warehouse’. At that time, the treasure warehouse was a super important item without replacement and he didn’t know the way to manufacture it, so Hajime had apprehension that the ‘Treasure Warehouse’ might break because it used magic power when taking in and out items. That

was why Hajime wanted to avoid actually storing this mineral into the treasure warehouse. There was also how Yue seemed to detest this mineral stone even though she didn't say it out loud.

While transforming that sealing stone into blocks, Hajime continued his words towards Kaori who kept sending him glances.

"Yeah, that punch, it literally reverberated until my core. Even what you said that I'm the worst and uncool, those words stabbed deeply."

"Aa, uuu. E, err…that…"

Kaori raised a strange moan and looked all shook up.

"If it was another person doing that, then it wouldn't affect me like that at all though."

"Eh?"

"Those who can do the same thing like Kaori and make it reverberate until deep inside me, well, I guess there are only Shia and Tio left."

"You mean…"

"…Perhaps I cannot say anymore that you are just 'merely important' for me I guess."

"…Hajime-kun."

The sealing stone that was carved apart into blocks was stored into the new 'Treasure Warehouse' that Hajime recreated after coming to Orcus. While doing that, Hajime was murmuring as though talking to himself, causing Kaori's eyes to open wide.

Hajime suddenly stood up and his gaze met with Kaori. Those eyes lacked sharpness, instead they were clad in a gentle atmosphere. Kaori's heart leaped from looking at herself who was reflected there.

"Thank you, Kaori. For continuing to think about me. …I wanted to say just that before killing that guy."

"…Stop it. Something like that, it sounded like last will for some reason, that's ominous."

"Haha, I guess. My bad, that's not like me."

Kaori shook her head left and right toward Hajime who was smiling wryly.

"No, me too, thank you. I'm happy. …Fufu, I have to say this to Yue when she comes back. Hajime-kun is going dere. Anyway, I finally got Shia's position, I'll say that to her."

"Kuku, if you do that you will get bullied again, you know? After all, for some reason Yue likes to be playful with Kaori."

"Uu, that's, she absolutely enjoyed my reaction to that, didn't she? It feels irritating when I remember it. While Hajime-kun and the others ride into the other side, I must think of a payback present."

"Now I can imagine the outcome where you get paid back twice for that."

"Geez-, Hajime-kun is also enjoying it!"

Hajime chuckled while shrugging at Kaori who bared her teeth in irritation. And then, both of them closed their mouths at the same time. They sympathized with each other over their feelings that wanted to meet Yue very much.

Hajime once again smiled with Kaori and lifted his hand at the last sealing stone. And then, he turned the stone into block shape one after another stored them inside the 'Treasure Warehouse'.

And at that time, they noticed that on the floor where the sealing stone was left there was some kind of pattern carved there.

"…This is."

"What's the matter Hajime-kun? …Pattern? Isn't this Vandour Shune's crest…"

Kaori peeked from behind Hajime who was crouching and traced the pattern carved on the floor below the sealing stone with his finger, she then tilted her head at the familiar pattern and murmured.

Hajime nodded wordlessly and then took out from the 'Treasure Warehouse' the tear shaped pendant that was the proof of having conquered the Ice and Snow Cavern.

Right after that

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Such shrill voice sounded out, in resonance the pendant and the pattern on the floor shook.

The pendant that was put on Hajime's palm moved bit by bit as though it was dragged toward the pattern on the floor. It was hard to see because it was dark, but looking carefully at the center of the pattern on the floor, there was a small hole open where it seemed the pendant could be fit there.

Hajime and Kaori looked at each other and nodded at the same time. Hajime inserted the pendant into that cavity.

Immediately after, light ran through the pattern on the floor, then a sound of metals scraping against each other rose and the surrounding pattern rose up. It was a round stone pillar with a diameter around thirty centimeters. When the pillar rose until the height about Hajime's eye, it stopped still. And then, before Hajime's eyes, its side opened up.

"…So there is this kind of mechanism. A mechanism that can be opened only by someone who has conquered Ice and Snow Cavern huh."

"That, what is it? It was under the block that sealed Yue, I have the feeling that it's related to Yue somehow but…"

At the center of the stone pillar there was a mineral stone as big as a pinball with high transparency, in a glance it looked like a diamond. Hajime put it on his palm and stared it fixedly, from his side Kaori murmured her conjecture.

And then, it was soon proved that her conjecture was correct.

"…Looks like this is the same type of image recording artifact that was used by Oscar and others."

“That’s…someone who left behind that kind of thing in this kind of place, I can only think of one person.”

“Anyway, let’s try activating it.”

Hajime poured magic power into the white crystal.

Right after that, the dark sealing room was filled with golden light mixed with white. And then, in front of Hajime and Kaori who narrowed their eyes, the talk of the person who left behind the image recording began.

That talk, was filled with very deep love and affection, and then also tremendous resolve and repentance. And then, in it was an earnest wish, so warm and gentle that it would shake the soul of the person hearing it no matter what.

The white golden light settled, the recording of about ten minutes vanished with a whiff, then a lingering emotion that was hard to express, yet by no mean it was something unpleasant, filled Hajime and Kaori. Kaori was shedding beautiful tears that trickled smoothly which she forgot to even wipe.

“…We have to show it to Yue.”

“Yeah. This is something that Yue has to see no matter what…Kaori, I’ll entrust this to you. We don’t know what’s going to happen on the other side, after all.”

“…Yes. I got it.”

The mineral with the radiance of a diamond that Hajime’s hand handed over was accepted by Kaori as though she was handling a treasure.

“Nevertheless, it’s lucky that I understood the detail regarding the special trait of the sealing stone. Indeed, with just ‘Mineral Appraisal’ there is no way I will be able to grasp its true character. Well, though if I was told that I should notice it while facing that scorpion imitation, that much is…”

“In a sense, it’s cyborg? Something like that, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. Thanks to that, an urge to create various things is welling up in me. Myuu and Remia are also waiting right now. Let’s quickly return and mass produces the artifacts.”

“Mass producing artifact…what amazing words.”

Shrugging at Kaori whose face was somewhat convulsing, Hajime once more ran his gaze through the place that was his beginning with Yue. And then, after closing his eyes for a beat, he turned on his heel with resolve on his back once more.

After that, Kaori quietly followed after him.

Without looking back, the two of them exited the room, then the sealing room was shut in darkness. However, inside there wasn’t just cold darkness that swallowed everything, it felt like there was kindness drifting there too.

“Ah, papa! Kaori-oneechan. Welcome back nano!”

“We are home, Myuu.”

“Myuu-chan, we are home.”

Hajime and Kaori who returned to Oscar’s residence were welcomed by Myuu’s energetic voice and fully bloomed smile. The entrance of the lime colored building made from digging into the rock wall was crossed through by the beloved daughter with rapid footsteps *sutetetete—* to which Hajime lightly embraced her with his artificial arm that he created in an emergency.

Myuu instantly circled her hands on Hajime’s neck happily and hugged tightly.

There, from the dining room a clapping sound of footwear approached, and then wearing a pure white and frilly apron with the frills fluttering and ladle on hand, the perfectly equipped Remia appeared to welcome them.

“Dear, Kaori-san, welcome home. Will you have dinner? Or will you take a bath? Or else…will you have mother and daughter?”

“Wai-, Remia-san! That kind of cliché is unnecessary-! Or rather, just now didn’t you say mother and daughter!? Just what are you planning to make your daughter do-!”

“My my, sheesh Kaori-san, what about doing a happy family get together? That’s what I meant you know? Ufufu, I wonder what are you imagining?”

“-!? Re, Remia-san!”

“Dear, or else will you have Kaori-san?”

“Fue!? M, me? Wait that’s not it! Please don’t make fun of me!”

Kaori went ‘mukii!’ with her hair standing on end like a cat while Remia was only watching her with a gaze as though she was looking at something cute while going “My my, ufufu”. Before it was Yue, now it was Remia. It appeared that Kaori had the quality where she would be teased by older females.

Hajime patted Kaori’s shoulder to soothe her while directing his gaze at Remia.

“Stop it with that much. Watching it is fun, but right now there is not really much time. I’ll enter the workshop soon. My bad but I’ll take my meal over there.”

“Understood. Then I’ll bring it over there. Ah, also, there were contacts from her highness and Shizuku-san. It seems they will be able to manage it somehow. The speech of Aiko-san…the ‘Goddess of Harvest’ was quite effective. The number of people are increasing rapidly, so they said that they want the artifact’s production to hurry.”

“I see. Roger. Sorry to make you do something you are not used to.”

“Such a thing…if I can be useful for you even just for a bit, then there is nothing happier for me. Whether it’s for returning your kindness, and also as a wife supporting her husband…”

“No, you aren’t a wife, okay?”

“My my.”

“No, don’t go ‘my my’ here.”

“Ufufu.”

“No, hm, well, doesn’t matter.”

Hajime folded against Remia who enveloped everything with a matchless warm smile. Hajime caressed the head of Myuu who was reluctant to part while entrusting her to Remia, then he walked out toward the workshop.

Currently, the place where Hajime and others were at——the depth of the Orcus Great Labyrinth, in the hideout of Oscar Orcus, there were only Hajime and Kaori, and then Myuu and Remia there.

After the conversation at the audience hall in the devil king castle, first of all Hajime and others went to retrieve the valuables that Hajime transferred underground before they went to the devil king castle, then they used the gate key that they safely retrieved and everyone scattered to all over the world.

Of course, they had to directly go toward the place that didn’t have a gate hole installed, so transportation artifacts would be needed. Even Tio, if she was going to the village of dragon race, when it was time to come back from there she could just use a gate, but just going there would certainly take a few days so there was a necessity for an artifact that could fly at high speed.

And so, using the proof of conquest, Hajime entered Oscar’s hideout from the shortcut in Raisen Grand Canyon, and with the material left in the workshop he prioritized creating mini version flight artifact ‘Mic Fernir’.

In a manner of speaking this artifact was a skyboard. With a shape like a surfing board, it reduced things like air resistance with space magic and flew in the sky using gravity magic. The control was of course using sympathy stone. With the air resistance equal to nothing, the burden to the user’s body was extremely small, so it could easily give out a speed of five hundred kilometers per hour.

It was an improvised item so there was a flaw that the magic power consumption was large but, even leaving out Tio, all the classmates possessed magic power amount in the level that largely deviated from the standard so if it was just for the departing trip then they would be able to manage it somehow.

With that, the classmates whose soul was lit in fire by Hajime’s incitement scattered all over the world, and then through the gate hole, the world was rapidly beginning to be connected.

At the outskirt of the kingdom capital, quite a battle force had already begun to gather, with Nomura Kentarou in the lead, the people and workers with earth element aptitude were rapidly constructing simple defensive encampment. Hajime prioritized to create artifact for this aspect too that raised up their strength several times over, super optimizing their work.

It took about one day until that point. Two days remaining until the end of the world began.

Hajime who finished producing the prioritized artifacts then created an emergency artificial arm and treasure warehouse, and also simple weapons, accompanied by Kaori he then stepped his foot once more into the nostalgic abyss to gather material.

There was also the event where the moment they got out of the hideout’s door, a hydra manifested in reaction to Kaori, but the two who were there was a tag of a grown monster and god apostle, so they had quite a leeway.

After that, Hajime got Kaori to carry the ‘Compass of Guidance’ because she didn’t know anything about the abyss and had her help him in the gathering of necessary material, he too also went to the place for material that he remembered and ran around while trampling the monsters as though stepping over ants.

And then, Hajime who had gathered enough material somehow carried his feet toward the place where Yue was once sealed. His feeling that wanted to meet Yue naturally directed his feet there even while understanding that there was no time.

Kaori who similarly finished gathering material ascertained Hajime’s whereabouts using the compass, and then there they reached that recording artifact and the feeling that was put into it.

By the way, Hajime also asked Kaori to search for ‘God Crystal’ using the compass but…unfortunately, she was unable to discover one that had been compressed through many years and months until it could trickle ‘God Water’. It was a substance that was left only in legend, so it really couldn’t be helped. Perhaps just by being able to discover several small crystals should be thought as fortunate.

“Now then, well Kaori, I’ll rely on your cooperation.”

“Yep, leave it to me.”

Hajime who arrived in the workshop transmuted a round crystal pillar in the center of the room while calling Kaori. What they would perform from here was a method to resolve to a certain degree of their problem with the lack of time even if they couldn’t fully resolve it.

It was for this that Hajime chose Kaori as a helper because she was the one most skilled with regeneration magic.

“Here I go! ——’Temple Rend’.”

Together with a voice of fighting spirit, Kaori’s whitely violet magic power surged. In addition, Hajime roared his crimson magic power while enchanting the technique that Kaori used into the crystal pillar using creation magic.

Regeneration magic ‘Temple Rend’——it was a magic to stretch the time. The essence of regeneration magic was in the point that it was a magic that could interfere with time. However, from the viewpoint of the throughput and magic power amount, the extent human could handle this magic was only ‘regeneration’——to return the state of the target into the healthy state where they didn’t bore any wound, because such way of using it essentially only stopped at an act of projecting a moment of the past, it was named as ‘regeneration’ magic.

Saying it in reverse, if someone could surpass the limit of human, furthermore if they increased their proficiency in this magic and approached that essence, it would be theoretically possibly to not be limited with ‘regeneration’ and became able to interfere with time.

And then, if it was the current Kaori who had aptitude with regeneration magic, who had continuously used this magic all this time and became skilled, and in possession of a body that surpassed human body, it was possible for her to lay her hand on that area.

Kaori's magic power began to interfere with the time of the surrounding, her long silver hair that was dancing gently was gradually changing into gentle motion. Somehow, it looked like the whole workshop was growing dull in color.

"——Ha, Hajime-kun."

"It's all ok Kaori. You did well."

Immediately the whitish violet magic power filling the room dispersed as though melting into the air. Kaori put her hands on her knees while breathing hard. It appeared that she consumed quite a lot of magic power in just a short time.

"Haa, haa, ho, how is it?"

"…As expected. It's about ten times increment. With this, I'll have some leeway."

"Haaaa. I'm glaad"

Hajime who was staring with a serious gaze at the crystal pillar which was emitting faint light loosened up his face and gave Kaori words mixed with praise. Kaori too also showed a smile while caressing her chest in relieve.

"It's quite hard making this so how about naming it…as expected the name should be the 'hyperbolic xxxx chamber' I guess?" (TN: Hajime is making a reference to the hyperbolic time chamber in Dragon Ball here.)

"…I have the feeling that it's better to stop that. Isn't it fine to simply name it 'Hour Crystal'?"

"…You have no romance."

"Geez-, something like that doesn't matter. Now, quickly go to work, work! We will take care of the chores so work hard!"

"…I got it okay."

Hajime activated the hour crystal (temp) with a dissatisfied expression.

Immediately, the same like before inside the workshop grew slightly dull in color. With this, the time was stretched ten times longer though it was limited inside the workshop. An hour inside the workshop was just six minutes outside.

During that time, matters like contacting Liliana and others who were working on the surface ground and the sending of the artifacts were done by Remia (similar like with Hauria, Hajime had installed a gate with magic power storage that Remia could operate), while Kaori was carrying out the collection of material that ran out.

Hajime left all the chores to them and he just needed to continue to spit out the created artifacts from the workshop to outside. Hajime who was preparing weapons in the unit of tens of thousands really could be said as a human armory.

Hajime took out a large amount of material from the 'Treasure Warehouse II'. Every kind of mineral, monster fang, claw, bone, etc. was instantly filling to the brim inside the spacious workshop.

“Now then, let’s do this.”

Hajime lifted his hand at the same time with that murmur. Right after that, inside the workshop was dyed with crimson. It was as though the vivid crimson color that permeated everywhere was changing the workshop itself into a gem that was like a red spinel. In a sense, the scenery pressured on the heart miraculously as though they were being lost inside a gem.

As the proof of that, Kaori, Myuu, and Remia who were inside the workshop were staring at the light that was emitted with Hajime in the center with an expression as though their heart was stolen.

Even while Kaori and others were in a daze, Hajime’s ‘Mineral Separation’ sifted through only the needed material and created pure ore, then ‘Creation Magic’ enchanted the ore with necessary magic, ‘Precise Transmutation’ realized elaborate transformation that would make any craftsman go blue in face. Moreover, ‘High-Speed Transmutation’ did mass production that produced flawless and complete components regardless of how complicated it was.

And then those components were personally assembled by Hajime and a completed product was finished in just a few seconds which then was put on the floor.

Next Hajime held his hand over that completed product, no, more accurately he held his hand over the floor where the completed product was put, with that he engraved a detailed magic circle on the floor with the completed product on the center.

As the result, the materials scattered on the surrounding automatically moved and mass produced things that were exactly the same with the completed product. Not just that, the components themselves were mass produced with the mountain of material automatically extracting themselves and repeated the fusion.

Hajime confirmed the process and then he entered the creation of the next artifacts. He was already ignoring the magic circle that continued to emit crimson light and the mountain of Gatling gun that was completed automatically and moved to produce the bullets.

Those bullets too, Hajime personally created the first one and then he put it on the magic circle he engraved on the floor and the bullet was automatically mass produced, and then Hajime entered the creation of the next artifact again. His gaze was already not looking at the Gatling gun and bullet anymore.

Derivative skill of transmutation——as long as the material was available then it was possible to create exactly the same thing without the magic circle or image supplementation, this was the ‘Duplication Transmutation’, and then the ‘Automatic Transmutation’, until the magic power filled into the engraved magic circle ran out, even when the caster went away it would automatically continue to create.

The stream of crimson magic power filling the room and the crimson radiance of the magic circle deployed at Hajime’s surrounding…while being surrounded by those, Hajime narrowed his eyes as though he was meditating and waved his hands like a conductor, his figure that created powerful artifacts easily like a joke was exactly like the magician inside a fairy tale. If it had to be said in a realistic way then it could be said that it was a solitary production factory.

While Kaori and others were in a daze, artifacts began to overflow from the engraved magic circle. Remia's cheeks were cramped from being convinced that she would be slower in carrying out the artifacts than the speed of the production like this. The amount was obviously something that couldn't be handled with just Myuu and Remia.

Although such thing was already known from the beginning.

Therefore, Hajime entered the transmutation of the transport method. He projected the image he drew inside his head into the empty air before his eyes, and then he further hardened the image while his hand crawled there. The result, a humanoid figure appeared pushing through the mountain of material with crimson jewel buried on its chest.

Its lower body was multi-legged like a spider, the upper body had six arms attached like an Ashura statue. Further, the lower body that was connected to the spider legs were box shaped, at a glance it could be understood that it was a transport golem.

And then after creating one more of the golem, Hajime opened his mouth.

"Remia, Myuu. I'll ask you to control this golem and transport the artifacts. Send it from the gate to the kingdom."

Saying that, Hajime handed the two of them two rings. The rings had sympathy stone attached to control the golem. So that even the two who didn't have magic power can use it, Hajime put a function to store magic power and also an ability for the golem to further evolve.

"These two golems are created from the fusion of magic stone that I refined and monster material, they are a half monster. That's why, it's possible to force them to move with that sympathy stone, but it can also move by receiving a vocal order. I made them so they will listen to the command of the person holding that ring."

Yes, so to speak these golems were something like a living weapon that was the fusion of machine and living thing, the ring was something to control them and also to show the authority to command. Having said that, they didn't have a clear ego of self so as long as there was no clear order, they wouldn't make their own judgment and moved by themselves. Perhaps it would be easier to imagine if it was said that they were like monster Living Knight or Living Sword that often appeared in RPG.

It was a combination skill of creation magic and metamorphosis magic. As always, Hajime didn't have that high of an aptitude in metamorphosis magic, but by using a method where he used the creation magic as the main and enchanted metamorphosis magic using his skill, then he could use it well enough. Or rather, even living thing had metal element inside their body, so if metamorphosis magic was used with creation magic as fusion magic, then the transmutation technique could advance drastically using the side effect of the metamorphosis magic. Using this Hajime hit upon an idea of a trump card.

The sealing stone that sealed Yue and the scorpion imitation were basically also created by the same technique. Although because of the aptitude of the caster, the component of metamorphosis magic had greater weight in those two. The sealing stone was also created from special ore that deflected magic, but the reason it was hard for Hajime's transmutation to affect it was because the majority of the stone was living thing.

Myuu was tilting her head “Nnyu?” at Hajime’s difficult explanation, so Remia explained, “Papa is giving a present of pet to Myuu.” Although that explanation was a little bit problematic.

Anyway, Myuu who comprehended everything that was said to mean that she was presented with a pet, embraced Hajime in great joy, and then “Myuu will help papa nano!” Myuu manipulated the living golem ‘Bel-chan’ in high spirit.

It seemed the formal name was ‘Belfegor’ which was shortened as ‘Bel-chan’. The one naming it was Myuu. It was a naming sense that was unthinkable coming from a four-year-old. Hajime wanted to think that it was a coincidence that the name was similar to the name of a famous devil of the seven deadly sins. (TN: The name should be Belphegor, but here the name is turned cuter somewhat.)

By the way, Remia also asked Myuu for the naming of her golem, and then with a smiling face that was too lovely Myuu named it “Asmodeusu!” It was an immediate reply without any pondering whatsoever. Hajime could only pray that the golem wasn’t being possessed by something strange.

After that, Hajime mass produced every kind of weapon, Remia and Myuu transported those and sent them through the gate to Liliana and others in the kingdom, if the material became insufficient Kaori would dive into the labyrinth and gathered it up with her cheat ability and the compass…such process was continuing for a while.

A lot of outrageous artifacts that were sent to them one after another caused the people at the kingdom capital who didn’t know about the hour crystal to have a cramped face. Hajime and others enjoyed a happy family get together (meal) for a short time with the ‘Automatic Transmutation’ buzzing on the side with Kaori getting teary eyed from Remia’s teasing, although various things happened but in general the production progressed favorably.

Hajime himself also created new artifacts, he further strengthened his weapons even more than before, completing his equipment with certainty. And then, the trump card against Ehito too…

While those were happening, finally contacts from Shia and others who scattered to many places were also coming. It appeared they too were advancing the matters favorably. With artifacts that he would send to Shia and others in hand, Hajime prepared to welcome them in the hideout of Oscar.

Omake

In the luxurious bathroom where he was once forcefully made to climb the stair of adulthood by Yue, there was the figure of Hajime between the steams.

Even while relaxing his body properly in the pleasant bathtub, it was impossible for him to relax like before. That was because of his effort to recover the magic power that he consumed and also the preparation for the decisive battle, and most of all, it was because his dear lover wasn’t there.

His gaze that was looking at far away pierced the abyss, passed even the sky, and stared at Yue who he shouldn’t be able to see.

Those eyes, when they were narrowed painfully, suddenly, a young voice resounded in the bathroom.

“Papaaa——!”

Looking at Myuu who energetically rushed at him stark naked with her usual cute footsteps, Hajime floated a small smile.

And then, *pyon* he safely caught Myuu's body that leaped at him.

"Oy. That's dangerous Myuu."

"Ehehee, sorry papa."

Although he lightly scolded her for the moment, Myuu was busily hugging Hajime and no sign of repentance could really be seen from her. Hajime looked fondly at her thinking 'what a hopeless girl' while slowly submerging her into the bathtub so that Myuu wouldn't feel too hot.

Myuu leaked out "funyuu" voice while her eyes drooped pleasantly. That excessively cute figure stimulated Hajime's fatherhood strongly. He slowly combed Myuu's beautiful emerald green hair. Myuu melted even further. Now she was a droopy Myuu.

That figure of Myuu made Hajime felt healed a bit from the loneliness that he felt just now. Even so his gaze naturally looked up to the sky

"…She is fine nano."

"Hm?"

Suddenly, Myuu said out calm yet powerfully certain words. To Hajime who tilted his head and returned his gaze to her, Myuu with a conviction that was the same like the time at the devil king castle formed her words with a voice filled with strength.

"…Yue-oneechan is fine nano."

"Myuu…"

"Because, papa will go to meet her. It's the same like what happened with Myuu before nano. That's why, Yue-oneechan will be able to come back too nano."

"…"

Those words, rather than conviction Myuu talked like it was something decided already. For a little girl, if the big sister that she idolized was gone then usually she would be a bit more down but…it seemed Myuu overlapped what happened right now with the time when she was kidnapped and through that obtained an even stronger conviction. Namely, that Hajime would surely take back Yue.

At the same time, Myuu also obtained the conviction that Yue was absolutely fine which surely came from her enormous faith to Yue. That, Yue-oneechan will surely come home.

That was why, in this kind of time she couldn't feel down or anything. For Myuu who had watched Hajime and others until now, she had the awareness that she was a powerless existence that couldn't do anything. But, on the other hand, she also had cultivated a spirit twice of that awareness that could let her say 'so what' and blew it away. Therefore, she carried out 'thing that her current self could do'.

If she was unable to do anything, then at the very least she had to be able to cheer up the people who could do it, so first she herself would spread out liveliness. Her conviction and faith, she brought it to those people with all she had.

Looking at such Myuu, who was smiling wide in front of his eyes conveying to him “It’s fine!”, Hajime loosened up his face.

At the devil king castle, Hajime claimed that Myuu who was standing in the way of the rampaging him was “Stronger than himself”, but now once again he thought that those words were actually correct. More than himself, she was believing in Yue’s strength, and in the future that she wished for.

“…You’re right. I’ll bring her back soon. After that, next time, let’s enter the bath together with Yue, the three of us.”

“…Nn-“

Myuu let out her playfulness and imitated Yue’s reply. That was cute and lovely, making Hajime caressed Myuu’s head even more.

Like that, the painful thing in his chest from thinking of Yue who was not here melted out into the bathtub together with his sigh, now his body really relaxed in the true meaning.

But, there Hajime suddenly noticed.

Wasn’t Myuu planned to enter with Remia and Kaori?

For that Myuu to be here, in other words…

“My my, dear, you are really sweet to Myuu, aren’t you? Ufufu.”

“Ha, Hajime-kun. E, excuse me for disturbing.”

“As expected, so it turns out like this…”

Remia and Kaori who only hid their body with small towels apologetically revealed themselves from the other side of the steam. Remia was acting brazenly while Kaori was blushing in shame.

Remia’s body that looked voluminous somehow despite its slenderness was clad in indescribable sex appeal, perhaps because she was a widow. While Kaori’s body that was like white porcelain and had the beauty of a work of art which was molded in the golden ratio. Both of them were giving off tremendous charm.

Remia was at the right, and Kaori was at the left, each of them glued their body to him while soaking in the bathtub.

“You guys…”

‘What are you two doing while Yue is not here’, as expected Hajime was going to complain like that, but Remia returned an affectionate gaze at him before he could say it.

“I was thinking that if you calmed down by yourself, won’t you recall the pain instead…if we are a nuisance, then we will get out immediately.”

“Pain you say…”

“The pain of the heart has no relation with the strength of body or will after all. ‘She is not here right now’, doesn’t it feel painful just from that?”

“…Remia.”

It seemed he was seen through that he would feel pain from thinking of Yue. Hajime reflexively blinked, and then Kaori talked to him from the opposite side with a gentle tone.

“In this kind of time, someone should be there with you. When it was me who felt like that, there was Shizuku-chan who stayed with me…I won’t be able to become Yue’s replacement but, I want to become your support even for just a little. If I cannot do that, then when Yue comes back she will make fun of me.”

Kaori merely conveyed that she was at his side while chuckling. The words that came from her personal experience were heavy. During the days when Hajime was gone, Kaori didn’t break even then was because her best friend nestled close at her side through all that time for her. That was why, the feeling of ‘I too know what you feel’ was naturally conveyed to Hajime from her.

Hajime sensed that he was given consideration by the two, no, by the three including Myuu too, he leaked out a small smile.

“…Thanks. If I don’t get myself in shape, then it will be me who will get made fun by her, huh.”

“I don’t think that will happen when it’s Yue though.”

“Ufufu. Yue-san is really engrossed with Hajime-san, isn’t she.”

The three remembered Yue who clung closely at Hajime and chuckled at each other.

Hajime dropped his gaze at Myuu on his chest who began to go “munya munya”. It seemed she felt too pleasant and became sleepy. Before she fell asleep, she should wash her body first.

Remia and Kaori accurately guessed that thinking of Hajime. Beating Kaori to the punch whose mouth was opening, Remia told Hajime with a smile.

“Then, Hajime-san. I’ll wash your front now.”

“No, I don’t need my back wa-…right now, you didn’t just say the front, right?”

Hajime asked while his cheeks were cramping from noticing the words that were bizarrely different from the standard, and as expected there, Remia was answering with a smile.

“Yes, I thought that surely Kaori-san will wish to wash your back, so I wonder if I can wash your front instead.”

“Wai-, Remia-san!? What are you saying!? The, the front is…that’s…no, no good!”

“My my, then, Kaori-san will be the one to wash the front?”

“M, me!? I, Hajime-kun’s front, the front…”

Kaori's gaze was absorbed onto Hajime's crotch that was not visible below Myuu's shadow. And then, her face blushed crimson explosively.

"Are you two idiots. There is no way I'll let you two do that."

"My, if the two of us are no good then…..so, Myuu will be the one…"

"Hajime-kun!? That's no good, something like that! What are you planning to make Myuu-chan do!"

"However, that place is delicate…I will need to be at her side here to give her a lecture. Mother and daughter will work hard to give service here."

"I won't let that happen! I won't let that happen no matter what! Remia-san! I won't let Hajime-kun progress through that kind of abnormal path!"

"My. Then, who will be the one to wash Hajime-san's front?"

"Tha, that's…"

"Kaori-san, then let's do it like this. The three of us together."

"Hah, that way is…wait, that's wrong!"

Hajime thought. 'Kaori…how pitiful', like that. And then, whether it was Yue or Remia, Kaori who was played by older female as long as there was a chance caused Hajime to make a really complicated face from the gap of Kaori of now and of before when they were still on earth.

At the same time…

"When Yue comes back…Kaori's hardship will be doubled, huh."

"Nmyu?"

Leaving aside the two, Hajime rose from the bathtub and he whispered while washing Myuu's hair. When they took back Yue, he would be a little gentler to Kaori. Hajime sent glances at Kaori who was still being teased by Remia with a gaze filled with such pity.

Looking at such a Hajime, Myuu tilted her head in puzzlement.

Chapter 161 – At Nostalgic Orcus (End)

"Hajime-san! I'm home desuu!"

The gate that connected the space to the hideout of Oscar Orcus opened, from there Shia jumped in *pyon* like a rabbit.

She went to meet with the master of Raisen Great Labyrinth that they had once conquered, Miledi Raisen, as the messenger of Hajime, but now she had accomplished her mission safely and came back.

Shia saw the artificial arm that had been properly returned to the left sleeve of Hajime who welcomed her, her expression then became even happier.

"Welcome back, Shia. I got your report. Looks like you were able to meet with Miledi again smoothly, huh?"

“Yes desu. Unfortunately, it seems that Miledi-san cannot easily leave that territory. She will be saving strength until the day of the decisive battle and I couldn’t directly bring her back but… in exchange I received several things that seemed useful from her.”

“I see. You did well. Thanks for your hard work. So, you could enter using the proof of conquer?”

Toward Shia who was clapping on the luggage bag that she was carrying on her back with a smile that seemed to say “I have good things here!”, Hajime returned a smile while asking.

Once they received treatment like filth that was ejected by toilet, Hajime recalled the time when they were made to take the shortcut to outside the labyrinth. He tilted his head in contemplation thinking ‘don’t tell me she is going through that water channel in reverse?’. If Shia actually did that, then it was like she was going out from the inside of a toilet while saying “Good afternoon!”. So thinking about her maiden heart, he would have to reward her with his all.

It seemed that Shia too guessed what Hajime was imagining from his question. She smiled wryly while shaking her head saying that she was fine.

“The spring at the outskirts of Brook didn’t react just as half-expected. And so, I attempted to breakthrough from the regular entrance, but at that time the proof of conquer reacted… the usual transfer method at the first room sent me to the deepest room. It did it politely, while roughly rotating the room. Well, it didn’t affect the current me, so there was no problem but… as always she was an irritating person. Yes, truly.”

“I, I see… no, really thanks for your hard work. Anyway, get inside. Inside, the time is also stretched out so I’ll listen to the detail in the workshop.”

“Ah, yes desu.”

Shia recollected with her gaze turning into the direction of the beyond while a somewhat black thing covered her, to that Hajime somehow could imagine what kind of exchange she had with Miledi, Hajime whose wry smile deepened invited Shia into the workshop.

At that time, the moment Shia entered the building from outside where the gate was installed into the building, *gashon! gashon!* mechanical footsteps were resounding nearby. At the same time, a happy voice of a child reverberated.

“Ah, Shia-oneechan! Welcome home nano!”

“Myuu-chan! I’m home… desu?”

While Shia’s cheeks were loosening from Myuu’s welcoming words, she also tilted her head wondering “What’s this voice I wonder?” and her face peeked out from behind Hajime. And then, the figure of Myuu being surrounded by golems in the shapes that she had never seen and Myuu herself sitting on one of the golems shoulder entered her eye so that Shia’s words reflexively halted.

The number of golems were six. Their figures had multiple legs and multiple arms holding countless armaments with metallic shine from their bodies, every one of the golem had grim intensity. If for example, Shia encountered them inside labyrinth or somewhere else, then she would surely say things

like “Enemy discovered certain death attack desuu!” or “Victory goes to the one who makes the first moves desuu!” and attacked them.

Actually, until Shia came back several days had passed inside the workshop, during that time Hajime saw various points where he could improve ‘Belfegor’ and ‘Asmodeusu’ that he presented to Remia and Myuu, so Hajime applied sequential improvement on them. As a result, he accomplished the conclusion where in the end the golems could even endure combat, so Hajime undertook the production of the living golem itself in order to invest them into the battle force as weapons.

About that time he was also producing the large size weapons so they were becoming short of hands with just ‘Belfegor’ and ‘Asmodeusu’, and so while producing the combat golems Hajime also increased the number of Myuu’s pets while he was at it.

But, it wasn’t like there wasn’t any problem at all…

“Err, Myuu-chan, those things that look like golem are…”

“Myuu got them from papa nano! This child is ‘Bel-chan’, this one is ‘Sa-chan’. After that there are ‘Lu-chan’ and ‘Ma-chan’ and ‘Levi-chan’ and ‘Bal-chan’ nano!”

“Ha, haa, is that so. Uh huh, anyway, they are Hajime-san’s work so it’s ok desu. Isn’t it great, Myuu-chan.”

“Yes nano!”

By the way, the golems’ formal names in order were ‘Satan’, ‘Lusifer’, ‘Mamon’, ‘Leviatan’, and ‘Baalsebuf’ it seemed. All of those names were given by Myuu promptly without any pondering. It went without saying how Hajime’s cheeks were cramping from that. Later there would be a need to seriously investigate whether Myuu had attracted the eyes of strange things.

At the same time with Myuu’s introduction of their names, the living golems each took cool poses. Hajime didn’t give them that function, also Myuu didn’t seem to give them the instruction but… just why in the world they took that pose…

Their figures felt just like they were saying “Deadly☆Sins☆Battle☆Squad☆Demon Rangeeeer!!!” The red ranger was surely the ‘Satan’ of fury as expected.

Anyway, there was no malfunction that came out, and they were also really obedient toward Myuu that made anyone watching imagine the golems waving their dog tail left and right happily so Hajime chose to ignore it. Without stopping any longer, he led Shia into the workshop.

Entering the workshop, the hour crystal was activated and the flow of time there was a tenth of normal. Looking at the slightly dull colored space and weapons that were automatically produced due to the ‘Automatic Transmutation’, Shia leaked out a voice of admiration.

Hajime made such a Shia sit on the chair at the corner of the room and listened to her report. Shia fixed her sitting posture and took out several things that seemed to be artifacts from her luggage bag.

“Hajime-san, these are things that Miledi-san handed to me.”

“… From what I see they look like artifacts.”

“Yes. It seems that they aren’t perfect, but they are countermeasures against Divine Statement. If Hajime-san revise it, perhaps it can also be completed.”

“Hee… this thing is appreciated.”

Hajime took the gray ball with the size around a marble and stared at it.

According to his magic eye stone and mineral appraisal, it seemed that the ball was filled with soul magic. Inside the ball it seemed it was enchanted with a magic of ‘heart guidance’ that possessed the effect to convey one’s will directly to the state of the soul, or possibly to the soul itself.

“I had a prediction on the trick of Divine Statement, and it seemed I was right on the spot.”

“And, that means?”

“That magic is a magic that is connected with soul magic. It reverberates the words directly in your soul and binds your consciousness at a subconscious level. It’s something like an absurdly powerful suggestion, I guess. The magic needs the caster to murmur their name because of the common sense that a command needs a person to hand it down.”

“I see. After all, there is no person that will obey a command with an unknown creator, is there? The statement becomes even more powerful when they say their complete nam. Also, because the listener’s recognition of the speaker become even stronger, is it something like that?”

“You think so too, right? This marble ball… does it have a name?”

“Aa, no, I didn’t ask. Isn’t it fine to name it whatever?”

“Is that so. Then, I’ll name it temporarily as ‘Soul Wall’, this thing seems to have the power to block the Divine Statement from reaching the soul. It applies ‘heart guidance’ to disturb the conveyed will and turn the statement into just noise. It isn’t perfect. I guess because Ehito’s Divine Statement is so powerful that it cannot be turned into noise.”

Shia nodded “I see” toward Hajime’s explanation.

“Then… if it’s Hajime-san then you will be able to improve it so it can block perfectly?”

“Let’s see… I think it’s possible if I combine my magic power with sublimation magic. Though in the end, if it gets stolen like before and crushed then that’s game over.”

“Aa, now that you mentioned it… then, what to do? At this rate, it won’t be usable except for a surprise attack, will it…”

“No, actually right now I have a bit of an idea. I don’t have the attitude so there is hardship, but it looks like with a little bit more it will take shape. If I applied that then this won’t get stolen. Moreover, I can surely create a ‘Soul Wall’ with high effect. In any case, it’s a big help that I don’t need to think about the countermeasure for Divine Statement from zero. This is your achievement, Shia.”

Hajime joyful smile made Shia also flap her rabbit ears happily. The achievement actually belonged to Miledi who handed over the ‘Soul Wall’, but it was somewhat annoying to feel grateful to that person so

Hajime praised Shia instead. Shia also had the same feeling somewhat so she honestly felt happy to be useful.

“Also, this too desu.”

“Short sword huh? … Even so I feel very much power from it. Just what in the world… hee”

What was taken out from the luggage next was a short sword wrapped in cloth with its blade length reaching about twenty centimeter. It was a simple two bladed sword without a handle guard, it resembled the type of short sword that was called a dirk.

Hajime who received it took off the cloth, that moment he gazed in wonderment at the power that he felt, next he investigated it the same like with the ‘Soul Wall’. His voice unintentionally leaked out at the ability that was enchanted in the sword. Looking at that state of Hajime, Shia also nodded in sympathy.

“According to Miledi-san, it’s called ‘Short Sword of Divine Crossing’. The concept filled into it is——’God killing’, it seems.”

“So, this is one of the three concept magic that Haltina said the liberators created, huh. So that Miledi had this. Chih, she should have given this thing right away.”

“… When I said that, ‘Didn’t you say that killing god or anything is troublesome, ehhh? There is no way I can give this to that kind of person, right? Is your head okay? Heey? Is your head okay? Heey heey’ she said that to me…”

“I see…”

“Yes. But it’s fine desu. Because in retaliation, I smashed the place where Hajime-san’s explosive destroyed that she grumbled saying it was hard work repairing it. I blew it into pieces. She was half-crying while saying sorry to me you know, ku-ku-ku”

“I, I see…”

Shia was black. It was the descent of black Shia. When Hajime was plainly sweating coldly, Shia stopped making crooked face and smiled widely while continuing her story. It was a splendid change.

“By the way, it seemed that there was also an artifact named ‘World Crossing Arrow’ to open the path to the Holy Precincts, but it was completely lost at the previous lost battle of the liberators. Besides, they were cornered by the masses before confronting Ehito, so it’s unclear how much effect the ‘god killing’ will have. It’s just, that short sword won’t injure Yue-san’s soul, so it can be used well desu.”

“That’s a nice one. For the moment, there is also the trump card that I prepared, but there is nothing better than having a lot of cards. And if this won’t affect Yue then I got no complain at all.”

“Isn’t that right. I was told, that the ‘god killing’ concept, it seemed the liberators lost their temper because they couldn’t really create the trump card, so all of them drunk a lot in desperation. In the end when they were all stone drunk they opened a tournament to swear at Ehito with foul language and that concept got created. Things like official stance or reasoning or mission, those kind of *idle thoughts* weren’t included at all in the concept, only the feeling of ‘die Ehito you shitty bastard’ makes up the concept, so it won’t affect anything else other than Ehito desu.”

“I, I see… yeah, well, I understand their feelings. Miledi is an endlessly annoying woman, but when we take back Yue guess we need to at least say thanks huh.”

While feeling sympathy and exasperation at the good relation? of the liberators, Hajime made a smile at how they had obtained two kind of useful artifacts.

When he listened further to Shia’s report, it seemed that Miledi would mobilize the golems inside the labyrinth. So Shia installed a gate hole there. It appeared those golems were also constructed from metamorphosis magic, so it wasn’t like Miledi was moving them all by herself, the golems were living things that moved independently obeying commands to a certain degree.

Thinking about it now, indeed it was hard to imagine that Miledi alone controlled fifty golem knights at the same time.

However, regarding the Holy Precincts or whether there were any more retainer gods other than Aruvheit, the weak point of the apostle or effective methods to fight them, etc., it seemed that Miledi didn’t know about those more than what Hajime and the rest knew. Rather, thinking about how they had already directly faced Ehito and tasted his strength right with their body, in a sense Hajime and the rest were the ones who knew more about that.

Although, even without obtaining any new information but after receiving these things, Hajime had no complaints at all. Though, if he actually met Miledi directly face to face, surely he would want to smash her face.

When Shia finished her report in general, Hajime took out from his ‘Treasure Warehouse II’ another ‘Treasure Warehouse II’ exclusive for Shia and the improved Doryukken——the ‘Vire Doryukken’m and other various equipments he prepared which he handed to her.

“Hauuuu, this is it desuu, as expected, it’s no good without this hard-cold texture desuu”

The moment she received her partner the war hammer from Hajime, Shia rubbed her cheek on the mechanical part with bright smile. She was whispering scary things like “Splattering the enemy with this is unbearable desuu”.

While somewhat drawing away, Hajime explained about the new functionality of all the new artifacts, but then suddenly the door of the workshop opened. The one who entered was, Kaori… and then, Suzu and Ryuutaro.

Actually, a little bit before Shia got in touch, the two of them finished contacting Fair Bergen and Haulia and allocated the gate key in those places and then they went to Orcus. And then, while Kaori was gathering material she also became their guard on the side. The two subdued the monsters in the abyss and endeavored to pile up battle experience and mastering the metamorphosis magic.

“Ah, Shia! Welcome back. Fufu, looking at you, it seems there are various results from you, right?”

“Kaori-san. I’m back desu! Also the two of you came earlier, wasn’t it? How is Tou-sama——the people of Haulia clan and Fair Bergen?”

“Yep, Shiashia. There is no problem. The people of Fair Bergen don’t have faith from the beginning. When they understood that it concerned the fate of the world, they acted quickly.”

“Yep. Though they looked uneasy about the fighting, when we said that Nagumo’s artifacts would be shared in full, they got motivated, yeah. As for Haulia-clan… aa, hm, well, ain’t no problem, yeah?”

“… Why, it sounds like question?”

Shia directed a suspicious gaze at Ryuutaro. Ryuutaro showed a faltering state “Uu” at that gaze and his gaze wandered, then looking like he didn’t really want to remember it he opened his mouth.

“No, there is really no problem at all. Just… that… they suddenly began to cry loudly it made me spooked…”

“Come again? Crying loudly? Tou-sama, was crying?”

“Yep, Shiashia. Karm-san was also included, the whole Haulia-clan were crying you know. After that it was a storm where they all talked simultaneously. They kept screaming things like “Boss banzai!” or “Finally, we can fight at his side!” or “Kill! Kill! Kill!”. The mist in the forest got blown away a little bit just from their voices. It was plain scary.”

“…”

“I think Sergeant Ha-tman style of training is just bad news yeah. Somehow, all of them had bloodshot eyes. Their killing intent was just amazing. An animal that looked like monkey in the trees dropped down plop… when I looked at its eyes, they were all white and it was dead already. Guess its heart stopped just from the killing intent.”

“… Somehow I’m sorry.”

Suzu and Ryuutaro explained while their faces were pale and they began to shiver. It must be a really abnormally terrifying scene. To put it bluntly, it was inevitable for the two to see the Haulia clan’s respect and affection to Hajime as something the same like the fanatic’s faith to Ehito. Inside their heart, they secretly thought “As expected, Nagumo-kun is demon king… no, maybe he is a demon god?”

On top of being able to participate at Hajime’s battlefield, that request to join came from their respected boss. For them who wished to fight together with Hajime, the words “Lend me your strength” from that boss was unmistakably something really joyous. The scene where all of them went ‘hya-ha’ floated in Shia’s eyes, her rabbit ears folded down with a plop and she also murmured words of apology.

Hajime who was smiling wryly at that exchange between Shia and the others moved the talk to Suzu and Ryuutaro in his wish to somehow avert from that topic.

“And then? What about your training result? Were you able to subdue good monster?”

“Uu-“

“Nope, not at all!”

Suzu who averted her gaze with awkward expressions and Ryuutaro who denied with lively laugh. For the time being, Hajime pulled the trigger of the new Donner and a rubber bullet shot Ryuutaro’s temple. “NUOoOOO!” Ryuutaro yelled while writhing on the floor, to him Hajime’s cold gaze was stabbing.

There Kaori put a stop to it in panic.

“Wa, wait, wait! It doesn’t mean that there is no result!”

“Hoo. Then? What is this result you speak?”

Suzu whose expression was trembling from fear due to Hajime’s lack of hesitation was twitching while answering.

“Ye, yep. As far as it goes, there was also Kaori’s help and I managed to subdue quite many but…”

“What, so you actually manage to do it properly. Then what’s the problem?”

“Err. First of all, I got a monster that can spit powerful acid, a large——centipede.”

“Aah, that one. At the upper stratum, there is also monster that is similar with that, but this one at the lower stratum can separate its segment to leap, it’s ability to scatter acid while separating its segment is unusual huh. I remember that one made me get a little cold feet you know.”

“After that, a monster that can fire exploding needles rapidly like bullet, a large——bee.”

“That one huh. Rather than calling it needle, it’s more a small missile isn’t it. I remember when I intercepted the needle I got swallowed in explosion, that was shocking.”

“A monster that swim underground like a mole——ant.”

“Well, it has surprise attacks going for it.”

“Having six arms that fires off wind sickles——praying mantis.”

“… Anything else?”

“… Things like spider or butterfly.”

“… Why are all of them only bugs?”

Toward that splendid lineup Hajime sent a gaze at Suzu as though he was looking at something bizarre. Right away Suzu burst out in tears.

“I don’t know-. Just why the monster that my metamorphosis magic can affect is only the bug type! Even though at the sea of trees I can properly tame the fluffy ones-. Orcus is just strange!”

It seemed that it wasn’t actually Suzu’s own intention. It appeared that she subjugated the bugs as a last resort. The figure of Suzu who was crying in anguish crumbled on the floor invited quite a pity.

Indeed, her monsters were a shuddering sight just from imagining the lineup. However, this place was the abyss, furthermore they were monsters of the lower stratum, compared to the monster in the surface they were far stronger. Putting aside the apostles, they would surely become a reliable enough battle force against the puppet soldiers of Eri and the monsters that Freed had put time to evolve.

“Well, come on, the other side might also show openings from the revulsion, right?”

“Are you telling me to fight while making the enemy disgusted? Suzu’s opponent is Eri you know? Even though Suzu wants to talk with her, yet from the beginning I already make her disgusted? Hics, surely Suzu will be thought as bug girl or something… uwah, disgusting, Eri will surely say that…”

“Bu, but but, Suzu-chan! See, you have that child don’t you! That one is fluffy, you know!”

“Wai-, Kaorin! Suzu told you that’s a secret!”

“Aa? Secret?”

Perhaps because the figure of Suzu feeling down while drawing circle on the floor was too pitiful, Kaori at her side was desperately cheering her up. However, the cheered up Suzu for some reason tried to stop her from talking in a fluster while giving glances at Hajime. Kaori too also returned to her senses and pressed her mouth.

The two who were obviously hiding something made Hajime narrow his eyes. His suspicious eyes were conveying “Don’t make a fuss trembling like that, quickly spit it out, ora.”

Suzu was making “uu” voice with her gaze wandering while Kaori was making troubled expression wondering what to do.

But, at that time, Myuu who rode ‘Belfegor’ entered inside the workshop. It appeared that she had something to communicate and she looked straight at Hajime, then she naturally stepped on Ryuutaro whose temple was shot and crouched at the golem’s feet. “Gue!?” Felt like such a voice resounded, but no one paid attention.

“Papa! There is rabbit-san nano!”

“Hm? Indeed if it’s rabbit then there is one here though.”

While tilting his head at Myuu who hopped up and down with both her hands above her head like rabbit ears, Hajime moved his gaze to Shia. Shia too flapped her own rabbit ears up and down.

“That’s not it nano. It’s a rabbit-san that’s not Shia-oneechan nano. It’s really strong and cool nano! Even when Lu-chan and Sa-chan and Ma-chan fight it together it doesn’t lose nano.”

“What? It’s attacking here?”

“That’s not it nano. See, when the hand of rabbit-san went ‘kui-, kui-‘, seeing that Lu-chan and others said You bastard, in front of princess you dare to challenge us. Very well, we will teach you this thing called one’s standing! and then they began a bout? nano!” (TN: The ‘kui’ is an inviting hand gesture in challenge, like saying ‘come at me if you dare’. Also the question mark in front of the word bout is not a mistake. The raw put it there, it means it’s doubtful whether the bout is really a bout.)

“… Lusifer and others, they can talk? Furthermore they moved by themselves?”

“? Lu-chan and others always talk, they moved by themselves nano. That’s ob-vious nano. Papa, what’s wrong?”

“… By the way, right now, what is Belfegor that Myuu is riding right now is saying?”

“Nmyu? … Just wait -su. It’s seriously just impossible for me to suddenly begin to fight you know –su. Love & Peace is the best Please teach that to them, master is what he said nano.”

“… … … …I see.”

Hajime activated his well trained ignoring skill in full power and endured the barrage of questions that he wanted to ask. There was a lot that he wanted to tsukkomi, but for Hajime this was already over his capacity.

And so, for the time being, he only comprehended the part where it seemed the demon rangers called Myuu fondly as princess. This was something extremely weird, but for some reason he didn't feel that it was something dangerous for even a bit, Myuu who was sensitive to ill will since she was kidnapped was emotionally attached to them, so he judged to not worry.

Although now he couldn't grasp the situation, so he asked Myuu to stop the fighting of Lusifer and the others and brought the rabbit here. "Yes nano!" Myuu replied energetically and she exited the workshop together with Belfegor.

"So? The monster that you should have subdued was giving provocation and fought, what is the meaning of this? Furthermore, you don't look like you are doubting that the monster is running wild huh? … What are you hiding? Spit it out."

In order to solve his other doubt, Hajime's gaze moved at Kaori and Suzu who were obviously acting suspiciously.

Thereupon, perhaps they finally resigned themselves, the two opened their mouth.

"Yo, you see, Hajime-kun. That child, he, he is not a bad child, or rather he is special. That child is admiring Hajime-kun, I mean…"

"Ha? Admiring me?"

"Yes! That's how it is! In a sense, Nagumo-kun is also the cause, that's why the moment you see him, at least don't shot him dead okay! Absolutely don't! After all, he is the only fluffy one that *agreed to accept* Suzu's metamorphosis magic! Really please Suzu beg you!"

"Just what in the world…"

Hajime could only be perplexed at the incomprehensible words of the two.

Right after that, with good timing that 'rabbit-san' or something was led by Myuu and her golems and entered the workshop.

Its figure was certainly a rabbit. Long rabbit ears and reddish black——no, nearly crimson eyes. In its white fur there were several faint streaks of red running. The streaks didn't pulse like other monster, instead they were like a pattern that shined attractively on the white fur. And then, what made the rabbit most peculiar was its hind legs that were developed to impossible degree for normal rabbit.

Even though it was somewhat different, for Hajime its appearance was something too familiar.

"Kyu!"

In addition its cry that sounded cute further stimulated Hajime's memory.

Yes, what appeared in front of Hajime was the monster that once pulverized his left arm and made a sport of him until he was cornered, it was that ‘Kick Rabbit’. Of course, it was only the same species and this one was a different specimen.

What was difficult for Kaori and Suzu to say was because they thought Hajime was going to blast the rabbit with no question asked. As expected, in this period where they couldn’t pointlessly waste time, they couldn’t commit a folly where a monster that had been subdued with great pain got instantly shot to death because of uncontrolled emotion.

“No, it’s nothing big, I’m not going to pull the trigger just from seeing this after this long. Rather, this one is a monster that appears at the first level you know? Don’t tell me, even though you understand it’s weak but because you want a rabbit you went until the upper level… wait, guess you didn’t do that. There was just no time that you could do that.”

Hajime noticed something strange from what he said and closed his mouth. Come to think of it, the two said baffling things like it was admiring him, that it was special, that he was the cause, that it agreed to accept metamorphosis magic, he recalled all those and his gaze asked for explanation.

However, before the two could explain, the kick rabbit acted first. After it entered the workshop, it immediately stared fixedly at Hajime while strangely trembling in spot, then with *gabacho!* it leaped at Hajime.

To that, Hajime thrust out his hand and easily grabbed the rabbit ears, stopping the kick rabbit in the air while it was crying pleadingly “Kyu! Mokyu! Ukyu”. It seemed that it wasn’t jumping to attack him.

‘What’s with this guy’, to Hajime who was sending her suspicious eyes, Suzu stepped out to volunteer to translate. It was possible for monster that was subdued by metamorphosis magic to have mutual understanding with its master to a certain degree. Suzu and the others had also attempted the mutual understanding with this kick rabbit, that was how they got the explanation about various things.

“Err, he said, Ou-sama, Ou-sama, I’m extremely happy that I am able to meet you. In this occasion, I heard that I can become stronger and agreed to be made into the servant of your colleague. My best regards. Ah, also if possible, I want to be named by Ou-sama though… is it no good?… what’s with those eyes! It’s true you know! He is really saying all that!” (TN: Ou-sama=King. Also the rabbit is speaking in Kansai dialect.)

“… Even if, he is talking with that kind of meaning, there is no need to use Kansai dialect, right?”

“Because, Suzu is hearing it in Kansai dialect so it cannot be helped, isn’t it!”

Suzu’s face turned bright red from being gazed coldly by Hajime and she made excuse.

Looking at Suzu’s desperate state, Hajime glanced at the kick rabbit that was still dangling in his hand, and indeed, the rabbit was directing a gaze that actually felt like saying something like that at Hajime. The round and cute eyes were getting moist entreating at him.

Anyway, Hajime further mustered his greatly flourishing ignoring skill and asked about the story at Suzu.

According to Suzu, it went like this.

At first, Suzu wished for a monster as strong as possible and with Kaori's cooperation they chased after the monsters on the ninetieth floor above, but as expected perhaps because the monsters were powerful, even with Hajime's special *new artifact* that raised Suzu's ability her metamorphosis wasn't really able to subdue them.

Having no other way, Suzu lowered the standard to around eightieth floor and searched the monster with the compass, but as expected it seemed the beast type monster felt that they were above Suzu's patronage with her fresh metamorphosis magic, after that even while thinking 'I don't wanna' but just in case she tried her magic at the bug type monster she encountered, as the result she was able to subjugate them with easiness that caused her wanted to tsukkomi 'what the hell' at all the trouble she met before this.

Even after that, Suzu who was able to subdue monsters limited only to bug type had her tension kept lowering drastically, for the moment she healed her heart gradually by catching a lot of butterfly monsters with beautiful appearance that could manipulate scale powder with various effects, while she was at it she was also subduing giant misshapen bugs in succession without trouble, and then she was about to start going back.

It was at that time. Suzu discovered a 'rabbit' that moved strangely quite human, it came from the stair of upper level full of vigilance, moving from shadow to shadow agilely and silently.

That rabbit also noticed Suzu and the rest, and its movement stopped still. It was a monster that they had never seen even once until now on the eightieth or ninetieth floors. Furthermore, fundamentally a monster wouldn't get out from the floor where they were born, so the act of the rabbit that normally descended the floor until here was obviously abnormal. And so, Kaori came forward with Suzu and Ryuutaro also in maximum alert.

However, as for the rabbit itself… it expressed with its whole body a joy that anyone looking would obviously understand. The severe killing intent and pressure that was characteristic for monsters of abyss were nonexistence. *pyon pyon* The rabbit hopped up and down as though dancing with its rabbit ears moving *myon myon*. The rabbit was like a lost child that finally discovered a human settlement after continuously wandering inside a deep forest for many days.

Kaori and others felt perplexed and hesitated whether they should launch preemptive attacks or not, to them who were like that the rabbit approached near slowly. It was as though the rabbit was taking consideration so that the other party wouldn't get agitated.

While glancing repeatedly at Suzu and co, each time the rabbit advanced a bit it would stop and confirm "Is it okay?" "Is it fine, to approach a bit more?". Looking at such a rabbit, Suzu was knocked out.

To her heart that was stormy from the possibility of her being called as bug queen, the fluffy white rabbit——whose behavior was really cute and instead of hostility it looked friendly——was too powerful. Suzu ignored the warning of Kaori who was still wary and leaped out in front of the rabbit.

"Suzu had decided right from my first impression! Please become Suzu's rabbit!"

Suzu bowed her head and her hand was presented forward, that proposal looked like a confession. By the way, the first impression of Suzu toward the rabbit was that it was a really suspicious rabbit.

That proposal of Suzu made the rabbit got taken aback. And then it tilted its head in bewilderment. This monster looked more and more human.

On the other hand, Suzu who was at her wits' end went 'No way I will let go of this once in a lifetime chance!' like a fan(stalker) that chased after an idol passionately until her residence, her eyes turned bloodshot and her breathing roughened, she began a sales pitch.

Full guarantee of all necessities of life. Three meals a day. No, four meals with afternoon nap included, five days work a week with two days off. Paid vacation provided! In addition, free time also could be negotiated! Furthermore! If the offer was taken right now, oh my, a special magic stone of Suzu would come along free of charge! With this you could say good bye to yourself of yesterday! Now, in this chance, wouldn't you take this status up surrounded by happy comrades in a lovely workplace!?

Kaori and Ryuutaro thought. Surely, no one would take that kind of offer right…

However, unexpectedly the bewildered rabbit, when it heard Suzu's last words——when 'status up' was mentioned, its eyes shined with fierce glared. As though saying "That one, more detaol!" the rabbit pinched forward eagerly and cried "Kyuu! Kyuu!"

Naturally Suzu's lips smirked broadly thinking "He snapped the bait!", even forgetting completely that the other party was a monster, she explained about the mechanism of metamorphosis magic cheerfully.

As the result, the rabbit who understood that he could evolve quietly presented its rabbit ears, accepting to become pretty much Suzu's subordinate monster.

Like this the rabbit became a comrade with that contract of employment?, and with Suzu's metamorphosis magic they attempted mind understanding. Or more precisely, from the start this rabbit was obviously possessing ego with intelligence that was impossible for a monster, with this rabbit as the partner it was possible to have mind understanding even using the 'heart guidance' of soul magic.

Accordingly, Kaori and Suzu heard about the circumstance of the rabbit with really different fur color, it seemed that this rabbit was formerly a same race with the 'Kick Rabbit' that Hajime once killed, and it was also from the same floor, but it descended down the floors in training trip and of all thing it became powerful to the degree that it was able to reach floor eighty with its own strength.

But, that was a behavioral principle and thinking ability that was impossible for a monster. The cause for that was Hajime. More accurately the 'God Water' that Hajime spilled behind.

It seemed that this kick rabbit actually witnessed when Hajime defeated the claw bear. For monster of labyrinth, the floor they were at was the whole of their world, and the master of that floor was the king. To defeat that king meant the birth of new king. They instinctually couldn't help but being careful of that king. At that time, the rabbit which was no different with normal monster was holding the greatest wariness and terror toward Hajime.

For a while, the rabbit was hiding from a distant spot while observing the tendency of the new king, before long, it discovered Hajime's nest——the cave where the god crystal was located. When the rabbit was able to confirm that it was a place he must not approach by his instinctual understanding, the aforementioned Hajime easily went away from the floor.

The rabbit knowing that the master of the nest had gone entered what he thought as a really pleasant and safe nest. And what he discovered inside, piling up on a dent of rock, was a small quantity of water that made vitality to well up staggeringly——the god water.

The rabbit drunk it all up in a trance until it was all gone, and then he felt a power he never felt until that time overflowing in his body. Magic power was naturally surging up, his mind became clear, and he became able to sense the surrounding presence several times more sensitively.

It appeared in the case when a monster drank god water, that kind of effect would happen. There was no way anyone would make a monster to drink a miracle water, so this was something that had never been known.

After that the rabbit went out to search whether there was any more god water, and while kicking around the monsters he encountered——he got too carried away and encountered the claw bear. Any kind of monster would appear again in the labyrinth after some time, but the rabbit who didn't even know of such thing was completely letting his guard down.

After that it was a death match. There was no place to escape based on the place. If the rabbit showed his back then he would be killed. Normally a monster would instinctually felt the difference in status and shrunk back in fear or showed its back and escape, giving an opening from that slip to be instantly killed, but the effect of god water made the rabbit to more or less have thinking capability, he challenged the claw bear half in desperation.

As the result——he survived. Ahead of the verge of death that he surmounted, he awoke to the derivative of his characteristic magic and splendidly pulverized the head of the claw bear with his tough leg. It was a fierce battle that it wasn't an exaggeration to say that the rabbit would die ten times over without the continuing recovery effect of the god water.

The rabbit looked at the previous king that he defeated and trembled. And then, he understood. That a living thing could grow stronger by training.

From there the journey of the rabbit to become strong began. His objective was to go to the new king who gave him the impetus. After catching up, he would show the king how strong he had became and he would say his thanks. And then, he wanted to try looking at a wider world… there he would fight many strong people and reach greater height!

Like that the rabbit who grasped the adverse fate like a certain protagonist somewhere, at that time he didn't have any convenient tool like 'Treasure Warehouse' or anything, when he found by some chance god water that collected even slightly at the dent of the ground from what Hajime spilled, other than a portion that he could save as much as possible he would drink the rest without any other way, and then while attempting to recover and strengthen his own body, the rabbit polished his technique and finally he acquired the strength to descend to floor eighty with his own strength and a thinking ability equal to that of an adult.

"… What's with that development that sounded like something in light novel."

"Kyuu!"

The first thing said by Hajime who finished listened to all the particulars was that. With an absurdly complicated look he moved his gaze at the rabbit who unnoticed was now sitting on his lap while directing round and cute eyes at him.

“Ahaha, isn’t that amazing. While going back we tried making him fight, but just with a little metamorphosis magic he got strengthened to a level where he could fight monster at floor ninety one on one without losing you know. This is only a guess but, his movement resembled Shizuku-chan, so perhaps he can also use ‘Ground Shrinker’ and ‘No Beat’ I wonder? Also, just from kicking there was shockwave flying out.”

“… I see.”

Somehow, Hajime felt that just in these few hours he had said those words so many times already.

“Err, and because of that, if Nagumo-kun doesn’t mind, this child wanted Nagumo-kun to give him name… because he said that he wanted name from Nagumo-kun, not Suzu.”

“Haa. Well, if you are able to make a powerful monster as comrade then let’s just consider this great. It feels like there are a lot of tiring developments right now even more than the fight with Ehito and others though… even so a name huh…”

Hajime dropped his gaze at the kick rabbit on his lap. The kick rabbit was looking up at Hajime fixedly. The two stared at each other. And then, Hajime whispered quietly.

“… Mi—y” (TN: A character rabbit named Miffy)

“Rejected.”

Kaori rejected it instantly. Her eyes were telling Hajime to apologize at the world famous mascot character.

Hajime pulled himself back together and moved his gaze at the kick rabbit once more. The kick rabbit was also looking at Hajime. And then, Hajime whispered quietly.

“… Peter Rabbi——”

“No good.”

“… Udo—ge.” (TN: Udonge is a character from Touhou game.)

“I don’t know that but I feel like it’s no good. Rather, be serious!”

Kaori’s scolding flew. Hajime was thinking really seriously so he clicked his tongue at how awful Kaori was, his expression changed feeling how bothersome this was and then he spoke with careless feeling.

“Aah, geez, then you can just use Inaba. Its appearance is rabbit after all.” (TN: Seems the name Inaba is often used for rabbit in Japan.)

“Ee, isn’t that too simple? Something, a little bit cuter is…”

“Suzu too, Suzu’s other monsters are all like that, so a cute name for rabbit-san is…”

It seemed the name was unpopular with Suzu and Kaori. But, right after Hajime said Inaba, the kick rabbit cried “Kyuu!” while jumping up and down *pyon pyon*, perhaps it was feeling something from the name. It seemed that it was pleased.

And like that the reddish black——or rather the nearly crimson eyes that was even more red then the kick rabbits Hajime killed before, the same color like the lines running on his body were gazing at Hajime glitteringly.

“Looks like he is pleased with that name, see?”

“Ee, … well, if the one concerned is pleased then it can’t be helped though…”

“Uu, Inaba-chan… after saying it once more, it’s unexpectedly cute?”

Both of the girls were reluctant but it seemed for the moment they were consenting.

And, at that time Shia who was watching quietly all the time until now judged that for the present the talk was finished and she approached Inaba. As fellow rabbit ears, Shia’s interest was forming toward Inaba. While smiling friendlily she was going to pat Inaba.

“Inaba-chan, I’m glad you got the name. As a fellow rabbit ears, let’s get along——”

“Kyu-“

The hand that reached out to pat was casually slapped down. Shia stiffened instantly in place. Inaba sent a glance at the rabbit ears of such Shia and then, “fuh” he snorted.

With blood vein pulsing on her forehead, Shia’s gaze turned at Suzu, asking what did this mean. A smile was still pasted on that face.

“Hih, Shi, Shiashia, calm down!”

“I am calm. And? What is this impertinent child is saying?”

“E, err, that…”

“Suzu-san?”

“Hii! Yo, you see, Rabbit ears like you are serving at Ou-sama’s sideee, I’m dying from laughter hereee? Polish your rabbit ears before coming back againnn! he said… uhii! No, Suzu wasn’t the one saying that!”

It appeared that Inaba felt something toward Shia who was a possessor of the same rabbit ears like him. He entangled his rabbit ears on Hajime arm with his eyes narrowing provocatively. To that Shia whose prided rabbit ears were made fun of also didn’t stay quiet.

“… To insult my rabbit ears that Hajime-san loved, that’s really a big talk, isn’t it. What nerve desu. Which one is worthy to become Hajime-san’s rabbit, I’ll engrave it into your body desuu!”

“Kyuu!!”

Shia’s reinforced fist grazed the nose tip of Hajime. A burnt smell stab the nasal cavity strongly.

On the other hand, Inaba who was attacked beautifully jumped and evaded, invoking his characteristic magic ‘Air Force’ he rolled and launched a powerful axe kick at Shia. To that, Shia blocked by raising her hand.

And then Shia’s beautiful legs were opened in front of Hajime’s eyes, it was swung to shoot down Inaba in midair. Above Hajime’s head Inaba’s kick and Shia’s kick clashed, producing fierce shockwave. Hajime’s hair was disarrayed.

Without rest. Shia and Inaba moved to inside the workshop while unfolding a fierce exchange.

“Hajime-san’s rabbit is enough with one desuu!”

“Kyukyuu!”

After that it went without saying that the two were shot by Hajime whose eyes were half-closed with messed up hair and burnt nose tip. It also went without saying that the surrealism of the shot down smoking two rabbits who were getting along at the corner of the workshop made the cheeks of Kaori and others twitching.

After that, the subdued monsters of Suzu——especially the amount of the butterfly type monsters and their ability were added with further improvement due to Hajime thinking that they had good affinity with Suzu, he also handed over the exclusive artifact for Suzu the ‘Twin Iron Fan’ and the artifact for transporting the monsters the ‘Magic Orb’ (Po—ball).

By the way, Ryuutaro who were neglected all that time was also given his artifact properly, he also grasped the way to use metamorphosis magic in his own special way also with Hajme’s help, so for the moment there was no problem.

Although the fact that Ryuutaro’s way of using the metamorphosis magic by using Tio as reference and how that way was the most compatible for him made Hajime and others got exasperated all together thinking, as expected from a muscle brain.

“At last, it’s tomorrow…”

“Yeah. Though it’s unknown what’s the exact time tomorrow.”

The time was just on the brink of late at night period. It was only one more hour until the day that Ehito informed as the day of the great invasion. Depending on the situation, it was also possible that it would start at the same time with the changing of day, so currently Hajime along with Shia were doing the last check regarding the departing preparation.

“Hajime-san.”

“Hm?”

“ ‘Even if for example something happened to me, Hajime and Shia will surely do something somehow. There is nothing at all that I need to be worried about’… she said that.”

“… Yue huh.”

“Yes desu. And I answered, ‘Obviously desu’.”

Inside the stretched out time inside the workshop, Shia was doing the final check to the new ability that she obtained half-forcibly using the new disposable type artifact of Hajime while talking with calm voice.

“Three days… that is the time in order for us to take back Yue-san but… at the same time, it is also the time until Yue-san’s resistance come to an end.”

“… Yeah.”

Yes, the time for Ehito to completely grasp Yue’s body was also the time limit until Yue was cornered to a state where she was unable to resist. No one said it, but at that time what kind of state Yue would be like… at the very least it was certain that it would be a state where no one could be optimistic about.

“Even so, I believe. That Yue-san is safe. That we will surely take her back. That even if she is unable to resist, Yue-san is believing and waiting for us.”

“Obviously. It’s Yue we are talking about. No way she is going to lose to that seriously ill chuunibyou that is painful to look at. Much less after she got beaten into shape by Shia just recently.”

“Fufu, isn’t that right. … But, it doesn’t change that the enemy is powerful. He is incomparable with everything until now. A resolve to cross the line of death is necessary for that.”

“… What do you want to say?”

Shia twirled toward Hajime and looked straight at him. Blazing flame of rage that her best friend was stolen and killing intent toward enemy, and then the resolve to take her back without fail was residing in those eyes so clearly.

Shia who displayed a spirit to the degree that made Hajime gulped unintentionally, resounded her words of determination.

“I, will be reckless. I will push through rashly. I’m resolving to die without surrender if Yue-san cannot be rescued. I will take even one more enemies to the grave together with me. I want it so my life and death are together with Yue-san.”

“… I see. And?”

“Please don’t stop me. And then, Hajime-san too please be together with me in this.”

Those words were telling him to die together with her depending on the situation. It was an ego that hated to survive only by themselves when only Yue died. And now she was telling Hajime to go along with her egoism, what unbelievable words. If Shia was a heroine in a tale, then those words would be a great disqualification for her.

But, Hajime who was told those words that sounded outrageous was common sense thinking,

“What are you saying after this late? That’s obvious, isn’t it. Whether we live together, or die together. Those two things are one and the same. After all, Shia, I don’t have any intention to let you get away. Don’t get cold feet just before the main event, okay?”

Toward Hajime who was showing a fearless smile while saying something even more egoist, however, Shia leaked out a chuckle “kufufu” as though agreeing to that answer.

“Yes desu. I want to form this feeling into words for once. After all, if at the last moment, I get told idiotic things like “Shia! At the very least you have to survive!” Then, I’ll lose strength.”

“Well, after all according to those guys in class, I am more a demon king than the demon king himself yeah. A demon king won’t let go of anything by his own initiative. I won’t spit out that kind of shitty cold line okay. Well, there is not going to be any death without surrender or anything. I will get into my hand everything that I want, I’ll crush all those that are in the way.”

“Ahaha, as expected from Hajime-san desuu. Your line is completely like a demon king——full speed ahead as the villain desuu!”

Shia who laughed humorously for a while shouldering the Vire Doryukken exultantly, showing that she was fully prepared. And then she spoke with a gaze that filled with determination.

“Let’s take back Yue-san quickly… and then do the earnestly desired threesome okay!”

“… You spoiled various things, this horny rabbit.”

Shia exited the workshop while whispering ‘looking forward to it desuu’. Hajime who gave a tsukkomi and exasperated gaze to that back figure, a beat later, saying ‘what a hopeless fellow’ he floated a smile where affection and trust could be felt.

And then, accomplishing the quota of the mass-produced weapons, Hajime and the others who were fully prepared finally departed from the depth of Orcus Great Labyrinth in order to link up with the surface group.

Chapter 162 – Before the Decisive Battle

Shizuku was waiting to welcome Hajime and others ahead of the gate that they passed through.

“Finally you all came. Everyone is waiting. Follow me.”

Shizuku only said that before turning on her heel and walking ahead toward the boorish fortress right in front of them from the plaza where the gate hole was set up.

In a glance, it was obvious that it was a fortress of red brick that was constructed in a hurry; however, the scale of the fortress boasted a degree of completion that was unthinkable for construction that was done in just one or two days. Surely, this was the result of overusing artifacts from the age of god rank that raised up the ability of the cheat-like earth elementalist Nomura Kentaro and the artisans of the kingdom and empire by several times over.

That fortress and the great plain in front of the kingdom capital where a several hundred thousand person battle force was camping was illuminated brightly by lighting artifacts. The area was bright like in the afternoon. The capital of the Hairhi Kingdom and the God Mountain that were visible from far away looked different than usual. It was illuminated with light from the outside across the mountain’s shadow, making anyone seeing it feel a mysterious deep emotion.

Shizuku’s back figure as she led them was illuminated by such an artificial light, looking extremely ill-humored for some reason.

“Yaegashi, has something happened?”

Shizuku came to a standstill when Hajime unconsciously asked her that. Right after that, she vigorously turned back and with a brisk walk she approached him and grasped Hajime's arm tightly. Without any pause, she buried Hajime's arm between the valley of her breast. It was a 'linking arm' posture so to speak. While doing that, she urged him forward.

Shia and the others blinked their eyes at the unusual boldness of Shizuku's act.

"Oi oi, Yaegashi. Really what's the matter?"

"It's Shizuku. Feels like it's too late already now, but please call me Shizuku. I too will call you Hajime."

"Haa?"

Shizuku sighed tiredly toward the perplexed Hajime while explaining her true intention.

"His majesty the emperor is irritating you know. He tried to put up some kind of made-up reason to put me at his side, he came to make advances to me…yet even so, all of his reasons were logical and on top of that he did what he needed to do perfectly so I couldn't complain at all."

It appeared that Shizuku was fed up because Gahard was making passes at her.

"I told you that it's fine to give out my name at that kind of time, right?"

"I told him. That the one that I, lo, love is, Nagu, Ha, Hajime."

"You are being shy there. Then? If he was still coming at you even, then you could just contact me, right?"

There Shizuku's expression turned from displeasure into a troubled look.

"…I didn't want to be a trouble just from this much. After all, Ha, Hajime is the key of victory of the allied forces. Besides, in order to win against that Ehito, you need to work out various countermeasures, correct?"

"It's fine even if you aren't that considerate you know. It would be over just by opening a gate and filling him full of bullets."

"Fufu, because I thought that you would do that I held back from doing that. Even though it is rubber bullets would attack a leader of a country, right? That's why for compensation, right now, spoil me like this. His highness the emperor is also in the conference room so this will be also flaunt at him though."

"I see."

"Because of that, Shia and the others too, allow this a little okay?"

To Shizuku who said that with a little apologetic look, Shia and others also returned a smile telling her to not worry about it.

By the way, Remia and Myuu weren't here with them but there were demon rangers who were accompanying the two. Myuu and Remia also wished to accompany them to the fortress because they could do the chores there, but Hajime obstinately didn't allow that. However, in this dangerous time that threatened the world where a serious affair was concerning Yue-oneechan, to not be able to do

anything depressed Myuu's heart in a not slight amount, that was why Hajime attached a remote control ability to the living golem.

This ability enabled the controller to share the sight and hearing of the golem from the safe zone that was Orcus's hideout. On top of that, the controller could send their instruction precisely. With that, Myuu could accept being left because she also had something she could do. Papa was really spoiling his daughter.

Along the way, the soldiers were whispering "That's…" while sending them gazes filled with reverence. Even while feeling shy from those gazes from the soldiers, by acting spoiled to Haijme, Shizuku was able to endure and also reduced the stress that she got from Gahard. By the time she was able to heal to a certain degree, they arrived at a spacious hall inside the fortress.

A large table was put inside, at the seats of honor were Liliana and Randell, Gahard, and then Alfrerick, Karm, and Aiko. They were the center while other people were sitting around them. Aiko was sitting small and quietly with a really nervous look. Just from looking at that, it was obvious that the 'Goddess of Harvest' was forced to take the front stage.

When Hajime's gaze looked further around, there were a lot of faces that he knew. Ranzi and Viz of Ankaji Dukedom, the guild masters Barus, Iruwa, Catherine, and for some reason the clothes store's monst——Christabel. There were the commanders that he saw from each respective country and the aides of every representative, in addition, there were also Nagayama and Sonobe as the representatives of the classmates. Furthermore, although Randell was sitting at Liliana's side, Liliana's presence was stronger. It seemed that Liliana was serving as the representative of Hairhi Kingdom.

The moment Hajime arrived, all of them made expressions that said "So he finally arrived!". Next, their cheeks cramped from looking how Shizuku was clinging all over him. Looking at the time, it wasn't like Hajime was late, but to make the leaders of the world wait for him and when he arrived he came with a girl waiting upon him, what nerve…that was how the impression looked like.

Although, the aides let go of the matter with only their expressions reacting, the leaders with authority even among all the leaders here, the representatives of each force were all standing up noisily from their chair.

"Oi oi oi, Nagumo Hajimee. Making Shizuku wait up on you like that, is that an insinuation to me? Aaa?"

"Nagumo-san!? Why are you flirting with Shizuku!?"

"Ya, Yaegashi-san? Se, sensei is, thinking that kind of behavior is not healthy you know? Even though sensei thought that you are a person with a little bit more moderation that sensei can get along with…that's enviou…not that, that's really shameless!"

"You bastaard, in front of Kaori, you laid your hand even to her best friend-! Kaori! Just as I thought I won't give up on you! I will separate you from that demon without faiiil!"

"As expected-, Boss! Even now when your beloved woman is kidnapped, you still have the composure to make a new woman wait upon you-! Are you going to do a debauched party for the cheering up before the decisive batt-heboo!?"

In order from above, the ones speaking were Gahard, Liliana, Aiko, Randell, and Karm. Karm was sitting at a seat of honor was surely the proof that the name and deed of the head hunting rabbit had permeated everywhere, but looking at his figure that was shot by Hajime and writhed around on the floor, his dignity was nonexistence. Shia at the side was covering her face with both her hands while trembling all over from enduring her shame.

“That Shizuku is like this is Gahard’s fault, all of it. Say your complaint to him. Also, Gahard, choose, are you going to be a manly woman or stop making a pass at Shizuku.”

“My my♡ Hajime-chan, you are going to increase my compatriot for me again? Geez-, you really aren’t stingy with your presents for mee! I love you!”

Christabel with her frilly costume that looked like a magical girl that looked painful in various meanings was wriggling her body excitedly while sending Hajime sidelong glances.

Hajime was desperately restraining his impulse to draw out Donner while conveying to Gahard with his gaze that said “I’m gonna turn you into this thing’s comrade”. Looking at that, Gahard shrunk back in terror that wasn’t like the broadminded majestic emperor. For him, it seemed that Christabel’s queerness was severe.

The attitudes of the top group that seemed unthinkable before the decisive battle where the fate of mankind was gambled made the expressions of other people inside the conference room turn complicated. Should they feel it heartening or joyful that they had composure (seemingly) to act like that, or else should they felt uneasy that they were lacking in tension.

Hajime sat on a chair. Following him, Shia and the others also took their seats. It was because they understood the importance of the Holy Precincts storming group that seats were also prepared for everyone other than Hajime too.

Like that, they pulled themselves together and began the last meeting. The placement and distribution of the equipment and weapons, the learning rate of the soldiers, the action guidelines at the time of the grand invasion, the confirmation of the chain of commands, etc., they confirmed all the matters from beginning to end where they ought to be on the same page. It seemed that while Hajime was mass producing artifacts, the top brasses were already talking to each other. In the first place, the human side had been dialoguing with each other for many years and tied an alliance in the preparation for the battle against the devil race, so there was no big problem.

Battle forces of adventurers and mercenaries and so on were also coordinated by the guild masters, so it seemed that they could properly coordinate with the army. That too seemed to be because it was the duty of the adventurers at war.

The problem was the demi-human races which were added to that system, they had their own characteristic chain of command, so forcefully inserting them into the human side was a bad move. And so it seemed the demi-humans would be moved to fill the hole like hit and run attacks or supporting the human race.

Currently, the classmates seemed to become the core who taught the way to use and the effect of Hajime’s artifacts, but because the artifacts didn’t need particular magic circles or chanting, and also the characteristic convenience of modern weapons where everyone could use it, there didn’t seem to be

any particular problem in that aspect. Even now if they focused their ear, the sound of explosions and the dry sound of shooting could be heard resounding at far away intermittently.

The fortress had been completed for the present, the work being done currently was for constructing the battlefield with things like digging trench and the likes. A fortress was useful for a place to put gun emplacement and taking various lines of fire that obstructed the field of vision of the enemy, but the fortress didn't have the ability to oppose the disintegration ability of the apostles, so till the end it was only a simple thing. Their best bet was to make use of Hajime's new artifacts and construct an advantageous battlefield for them.

"The timeline is really narrow, but somehow it's taking shape. This too is the blessing of the 'Goddess of Harvest' I guess."

Hajime turned his gaze at Aiko and others with a bit of admiration. Actually, he was thinking before this that half of the situation that he was hearing currently wouldn't be in order even now. But the preparation had progressed to a level that surpassed Hajime's expectation, that must be solely because of the existence of a powerful flag.

This was the result of a clear sense of danger and righteous indignation, and also feeling of solidarity that was born inside the people's consciousness. Each people wasn't moving because 'they were told to do so', but because they were thinking that 'I also got to do this' that the preparation could be done this quickly.

"…Isn't that right? In a sense, I felt like I was made to learn once more how terrifying mass psychology is. Aiko-san is scary."

"Wha-. Liliana-san too, you were also inciting the people in high spirits weren't you! Your eyes were teary, you clasped your hands as though you were praying, and then with a lot of heroic you said something like [I will fight. Even if I am alone!]. I saw it clearly that time! When the people who were there had their spirit raised, saying that they will fight together, you secretly laughed, didn't you! That time I really felt a princess is scary!"

"I, I didn't laugh or anything. Please don't say something strange. I wasn't thinking anything like, perhaps I will receive praise from Hajime-san with this, not at all. It's the truth, you know?"

"Both the princess and the goddess, whichever of them are plainly creepy. As for me, this can affect the throne of the emperor, so I'm the one that got creeped out the most."

At the side of the princess and goddess who was having a low-level quarrel, was his majesty the emperor who didn't even hide his attitude as though he had seen something unpleasant. Looking further it seemed the elder of the sea of trees, the guild masters, and the lord of the desert also had the same expression. Only the clan head of the head hunting rabbit who was sending a thumb up at Hajime for some reason though.

By the time that they finished speaking about the main points of this and that, when the end of the meeting was approaching, Ranzi of Ankaji Dukedom opened his mouth calmly.

"Nevertheless, for the hero of my dukedom, he finally will be the hero of the world…as expected, it seemed that my decision at that time wasn't mistaken."

The receptionist lady of Brook Town's adventurer guild Catherine nodded deeply as though to agree with that.

"Since the first time he came to me, I thought that he would do something big for sure. But, never I imagine even in my dream that it would be something as big that controlled the fate of the world…as expected, even I couldn't anticipate this."

"That's right isn't it. That time when he rampaged at Fhuren, I thought that he would surely do something even much more than this, I thought that he could possibly be caught up in a strife that is related to the secret of the world but…for that to be a battle where the existence of the world will be at stake. Haa, my stomach hurts. The title of 'The Dagger of Iruwa's Branch Head' is already shamefully unusable with this."

"My? As for me, I understood already from the very beginning. If it's Hajime-chan then someday he would defeat even the devil king. Besides, he was always sending manly women for me, that was for the preparation of the coming day, I proooperly understood that. A good manly woman also has good sense you know!"

Christabel winked intensely. Hajime absolutely didn't attempt to enlarge such excessively dangerous battle force though. Hajime's cheeks were twitching. However, the top brasses starting from Ranzi and others, he saw their eyes that were colored with complicated apprehension that could be taken as sympathy or sorrow, and he guessed Christabel's motive of intentionally acting cheerful like that.

Therefore, Hajime shrugged his shoulders as though it was nothing and returned a fearless smile at the members lined up here that made him felt nostalgic.

"It's not like this is really strange or anything you know? An idiot self-styled god that cannot read the mood laid his hand on my woman. That's why, he is going to die. That's all there is to it. You guys too, it's only a fight of this level, so survive with some composure to spare okay? When I bring back Yue, we are going to play at the towns of you guys one more time. This time it won't be with any adventure, just a carefree sightseeing, yeah."

Naturally it wouldn't be an easy fight just like Hajime said. It would be a deadly combat piled up on deadlier combat, a historical and unprecedented decisive battle of the whole mankind. Without any doubt this was a holy war that would decorate a page of legend. But, exactly because of that, the boasting attitude of Hajime instead encouraged Ranzi and others, they were all "Aa, it can't be helped if we are told that. Let's win." And all the people inside the conference room were also the same like that.

And, at that time, the outside suddenly became noisy. The people in the conference room were going "Uwah, is the invasion starting-" with their faces blurred by tension.

There, a soldier rushed in with flustered look and reported with a loud voice that had hope and awe mixed in it.

"A, a great number of dragons appeared from the teleportation circle at the square! They are the dragon race that comes for reinforcement!"

It appeared that the last reliable ally had come back.

Hajime lifted the corner of his lips and quietly stood up, he exited the conference room taking Shia and others with him. The other people too, after looking at each other for a moment, they chased after Hajime's back while feeling shaken from hearing about the legendary dragon race.

"Goshujin-sama! Thy beloved servant hath come back! Now, let me receive the love!"

Tio who instantly returned from the black dragon form to her human form beautifully ignored her dragonified compatriots and the people at the surrounding who were taken aback from seeing them. She dived toward Hajime's chest.

And so, naturally, Hajime discharged his gun.

DOPAN-!

Like that, the familiar sound reverberated, the special rubber bullet hit the forehead of Tio who was panting while performing Lup-n Dive with a look of expectation.

After rotating beautifully three times backward in midair, the back of her head hit hard on the ground before Hajime's eyes.

The place was filled with silence where even bug would hesitate to chirp. Amidst the people who were lost for words from being unable to grasp the situation, the shot down Tio was twitching in intoxication with an expression of ecstasy while her back arched like a bridge, and then she rose up smoothly without any preliminary motion. That disgusting movement and her slovenly expression creeped out the surrounding.

"Th, the punishment after three days long…haa haa, aahn, because I endured too much I felt it excessively…nn-"

"Welcome back Tio. It's great that you made it in time. To arrive in dragonification state of all thing. …That was a good demonstration yeah?"

"Fufu, art not that true? This is the legendary race that hath confined themselves for five hundred years. I thought that if we art going to do this then we might as well act the role to raise the morale…Yes, it's great that we art able to strike them all dumb."

As expected, the surrounding couldn't follow the pace of Hajime and Tio who progressed the talk as though nothing happened. Rather than saying that the people were struck dumb by the arrival of the dragon race, the exchange of Hajime and Tio was the main reason they were struck dumb, but Tio puffed up her chest thinking that her plan succeeded.

"Tio-san, welcome back. But, if I have to say just in case, I think that this difficult atmosphere is because they are shown the relationship between Hajime-san and Tio-san that is showed too naturally even though it's abnormal you know?"

"Yep. I have been thinking this many times before but, Hajime-kun too is mostly in harmony with Tio-san isn't he."

"In a sense, it feels like Hajime has to be Tio-san's master no matter what huh, like that? My own familiarity that feels that this is natural even though it should be a spectacle to be shocked about is scary."

Shia, Kaori, and Shizuku who were unable to be indifferent? were making tsukkomi with an exasperated face. Hajime and Tio were staring in puzzlement. It seemed that in various meanings it had been already too late for them to be treated.

It was at that timing that the six dragons that appeared in the square shined, the next moment six silhouettes of humans appeared. All of them were male. Their muscular appearances wore clothes that looked similar to Tio's Japanese clothes. Every one of them was a handsome guy. But, their hair colors were colorful, the color resembled the color of the scales when they transformed into a dragon. Scarlet, indigo blue, amber, navy blue, gray, deep green, the colors were all over the place.

From among them, the scarlet haired person, a man past middle age that emitted out a remarkable dignity walked forward until he was in front of Hajime and the others. Liliana and the others who chased behind Hajime——the leaders of each country were also here. Certain footsteps that weren't timid at all even in front of those leaders and a 'weight' that was like a really big tree was approaching. Those factors were making everyone comprehending in a really natural way, that 'this person was king'.

Liliana, Gahard, Alfrerick, and the others, the leaders of each country were slightly faltering due to this great man; however, the man's eyes narrowed the moment he saw Hajime who warded off his pressure like a flexible willow. Those eyes weren't giving a dangerous look, but it was a gaze where deep interest and admiration were mixed.

"Hairhi Kingdom's Liliana S B Hairihi-dono, Helsha Empire's Gahard D Helsha-dono, Fair Bergen's elder Alfrerick Haipist-dono. This is our first time meeting. I, am the leader of dragon race, Adol Claus. In the peril of this occasion, we the dragon race will also ask to be allowed to participate. Our compatriots are still waiting in the village and they can be summoned through the gate anytime. They will surely be useful at the battle against the apostles. Please take care of us."

His voice wasn't loud by any means, rather it even made the listener feel calm. Even so, the words could be heard even by the soldiers who were looking from afar at the corners. They raised a commotion "Oo" hearing the man's words. The race that only made their entrance in the legend was really surviving until now, and in this time of crisis they would fight together with them. With how the dragon race had displayed their dragon form from the beginning, the morale of the soldiers looked like it increased by quite a lot.

Liliana and the others returned the greeting unanimously where Adol responded by nodding generously. It seemed that his personality was gentle, contrary to his stern appearance. He made anybody feel an intellectual tolerance that could envelope everything. Perhaps it should be said as expected from a race that Yue once treated as an example. This man was exactly a proper dragon race.

Hajime and the others filled their eyes with disappointment in full power and sent their gaze at Tio. "Hm?" Tio cocked her head in puzzlement. It was as though she didn't understand why they looked at her like that.

In order to talk about the action guidelines when the invasion came, Adol was going to head to the conference room with Liliana and the others. It was unrelated to the Holy Precincts storming group, so Hajime and the others stayed behind. He had reunited back with Shizuku and Tio so it was necessary to hand over artifacts to them and talk about their action plan when they entered the Holy Precincts.

But before that, a dragon man with indigo hair was walking toward Hajime's direction. Actually at the point of time when Hajime appeared, this man immediately directed a fierce glint of eyes at Hajime, but it seemed that he understood the right place and time and waited until Adol's greeting was over. He was a good-looking man at the age of early twenty. Come to think of it, all the dragon race people who came were all amazingly handsome guys.

"…You bastard. Just what in the world have you done to princess?"

The indigo-haired man asked that while glaring straight at Hajime with a voice that sounded like he wanted to kill. Hearing that, Hajime exposed a rare puzzled expression and he turned his gaze at Liliana's direction, Not just Hajime, everyone would think about Liliana if they heard the word 'princess'.

Gazes gathered at Liliana wondering if she had some kind of relationship with the dragon race that had been hiding from the front stage all this time, but Liliana herself had no knowledge of that at all and she shook her head left and right vigorously.

"Where are you looking at! If a dragon race says the word princess then it's obviously about Tio-sama!"

Those words made Hajime and the rest stiffened. They moved their gaze to Tio in a state where the sound of *gi-gi-gi* almost could be heard from their stiff movements. To that, Tio's cheeks puffed into crimson and she averted her gaze, as though she was a male in puberty that went shy because his classmates came to know that his family was calling him with '-chan' added.

Hajime murmured.

"Princess?"

Shia murmured.

"Princess?"

Kaori murmured.

"Princess?"

Shizuku murmured.

"Princess?"

And then, everyone whispered with their voices in unison.

" " " " "No waayy" " " " "

Tio howled.

"Wha, what! Is it bad if I am called princess! I am more or less the granddaughter of the clan head, so it's not strange even if I am called that!"

"Aaaa, yeah. You're right, princess Tio. It's nothing bad at all, princess Tio."

"Forgive me princess Tio. It sounds bad for some reason but, you are asking us to call you princess Tio from now on aren't you, princess Tio?"

“Ye, yep, it’s not strange at all you know? Princess Tio? Yep, I think it sounds fine you know, princess Tio.”

“I, I think it’s fine. Even if, it sounds like that but a princess is a princess isn’t it? Princess Tio.”

Tio whose face was dyed bright red from shame was trembling while she howled once more with teary eyes.

“Nugaa—! Stop it already! I feel extremely embarrassed somehow! I beg all of thou, call me just like how it is until now! This kind of shame doesn’t feel good for even a bit!”

“What’s with you, isn’t it fine princess Tio. Isn’t it cute princess Tio. It has amazing echo you know princess Tio. Teach us this kind of thing sooner princess Tio. From here on too you will forever be princess Tio.”

“Stop it alreadyyyyy”

Approaching Tio who crouched down while covering her face and her body writhing, Hajime further called her princess repeatedly into her ear. In his face sadism and affection were splendidly existing in harmony, it was an ‘S’ face that could be called superb. As expected, Tio(pervert)’s master could be no one but Hajime. Everyone was comprehending that while sending their exasperated gaze at Hajime.

There, inside the atmosphere that became strange, the indigo haired man raised his voice at Hajime with a gaze that looked like a devilish homicide.

“You bastaard, what disgrace are you doing toward princess…as I thought, you are using some kind of suspicious artifact to brainwash her right!”

Somehow that statement closely resembled a certain hero (lol) somewhere.

“Hey, Ristas. Don’t say something so rude to Goshujin-sama. I had said this many times, but I long for Goshujin-sama from my heart. No matter even if thou art someone like my younger brother, I won’t stay quiet if you are too rude.”

“-, princess! You are being tricked! Please open your eyes!”

“Muu, really someone like thou. On what basis thou art saying such a thing.”

The indigo-haired man that was called Ristas by Tio, when he was looked at by Tio with a gaze as though she was looking at a child throwing a tantrum, it was as though his store of patience finally ran out. He raised an angry voice from his heart, from his heart that was filled with extremely fierce emotions.

“There is no way the princess of the dragon race is this kind of pervert-!!!”

“ “ “ “ “Indeed.” “ “ “ “

All of the people in that place nodded in unison. Certainly, what he pointed out was truly correct.

“Before princess left the village, she was wise and compassionate, her strength was also surpassing the clan head. She was a great lady to whom everyone harbored affection and reverence! By no means she is a person who will show expression of ecstasy from pain, or someone who would make a smile that looks strangely joyful while she was crouching in shame and writhing from verbal abuse. She wasn’t that

kind of person at all! It's only natural to think that the human over there had done something sinister to her!"

" " " " "Indeed." " " " "

Once more all the people in that place nodded in unison. Indeed, what he pointed out was the most correct.

"No, not to mention, for princess to call that kind of human youth, Go, Goshujin-sama or, or or or, or the likes! Impossible!"

Tio when she was at the hidden village of dragon race was surely a charming woman that no one could find fault at as the granddaughter of the clan head. Right now she was a hopeless pervert that couldn't be saved anymore, but her wisdom and prudence that she displayed at every turn, and then her deep compassion and courage that wouldn't consider even her own safety when it was for the sake of her comrades, all of those were also Tio's charm that had been conveyed enough at Hajime and others.

Looking from the view point of the dragon race people who only knew about Tio's good points, Tio who had turned into a pervert looked completely like a different person. Most likely when she returned to her village, in the process of showing the recorded image and explaining about Hajime and others, she freely displayed her perverted nature without restraint to her fellow clan.

When she came back, the princess that was loved by everyone had turned into a massive pervert…it was really easy to guess what would they think in their heart.

But, even so it also felt like that Ristas's fury was a little too far. The dragon people other than him didn't send gazes that was that unfriendly at Hajime. Rather they looked like they had interest in what kind of human the man that Tio chose.

Ristas looked like he was further heating up and about to argue even more vehemently, but it was at that time a remonstrating voice resounded.

"Ristas, act properly."

"Cla, clan head…but!"

Although Adol remonstrated Ristas, Ristas's expression wasn't accepting that. To such Ristas, Adol opened his mouth with his eyes squinting in amusement.

"This is something that Tio chose herself. If she is really brainwashed, there is no way I wouldn't notice it. The fact is that Tio is longing for him from her heart. Although Tio's change knocked me out of my wits, but…"

"Then!"

"But, that change too, if it makes Tio happy then I don't mind. That child was tired of the life in the hidden village. She had faithfully protected the law from her own pride as a dragon and her own position but…there is no doubt that her heart was drying from continuing to harbor dark and heavy matter without any outlet. She departed for the mission of this time half-forcibly was surely because she unconsciously was searching for 'something'. Tio had found that 'something'. And then, she is smiling in happiness. Isn't that enough?"

“Tha, that is…”

“Jii-sama…” (TN: Grandfather.)

Ristas was at lost for words. And then, Tio’s expression too also loosened up from the gaze filled with affection that Adol sent to her.

“Besides, Ristas. For a dragon race, to dress up your jealousy with official stance and vent your anger, that is not an admirable thing to do you know?”

“Wha, what are-“

“What are you getting agitated for. You trained yourself day by day following Tio’s words that she wouldn’t take a spouse that is weaker than herself, that matter is known by all the people in the village. Did you think that it wouldn’t be known after you continuously challenged the fiancée candidates of Tio into a match?”

Adol’s expression turned a bit exasperated at Ristas who showed his agitation. When Hajime turned his gaze at Tio at his side, Tio looked back at him with an expression that looked troubled. It appeared Tio also knew about Ristas’s feeling. Furthermore with a small voice, “Those guys art also fiancée candidates” she turned her gaze at the other dragon people.

They were talking in small voices with deep interest, their faces close to each other with their eyes narrowing at Hajime and Tio. Ristas’s eyes lifted up once more. Of all things, it seemed that Tio at the village was seriously a popular girl. At the very least, they idolized her so much that even when her clan members had seen her perverted figure they didn’t immediately get disillusionment.

Adol asked to Liliana and others “Please give me a bit of time”, and then his gaze turned to Hajime.

“I am glad to meet you, Nagumo Hajime-kun. I heard about you from Tio. I was also shown the recording of the battle at the devil king castle. It was splendid how you slaughtered a god. For us, even if we faced such opponent in a group we would be no match at all.”

“Nice to meet you, Adol-dono. I am the reason that caused a strange door to open for your granddaughter. The decisive battle will be soon, but I have the resolve for at least getting a punch in the face.”

The surrounding was making a stir. The reason was mainly because of Hajime’s honorific language. Here and there comments like “Someone cast healing magic-!” or “The demon king went mad!” or “In this kind of time the trump card of mankind is…the world is already over-!” could be heard.

At the same time, Hajime’s body was enveloped in light. It was a healing magic from Kaori. Shia was readying her Vire Doryukken. She was thinking that Hajime would be fixed by hitting him. Shizuku was covering her face. It was as though she was witnessing a tragedy that couldn’t be recovered from.

And then Tio at his side was creeped out and drew away from him.

Hajime’s cheeks were grandly twitching.

“Hmm. It seems that you are a little different from the image recording and the story that I heard but…from the reaction around us it looks like this is different from your usual.”

“Well, you are Tio’s family. If it’s against the clan head of dragon race then I’ll talk normally, but if it’s Tio’s grandfather, then I’ll pay attention to my speech at least.”

“Hou! So it’s because I am Tio’s grandfather. Fufu-, I see, I see.”

Adol smiled broadly feeling a little happy at Hajime’s words. His dignified aura until now instantly dispersed and his air became like a good-natured old man. Even the creeped out Tio, when she heard the reason for Hajime’s abnormal attitude, her expression turned bright and soft as though she was made to eat something sweet.

“Then, this is a great chance. How about I call you Hajime-kun. Hajime-kun, I don’t have any plan to punch you. I also said this just now, but if Tio can smile from her heart then that’s enough for me. Rather, I’m happy that you can accept this stubborn person who for the sake of her own creed persisted to be unmarried for five hundred years.”

“Is, that so?”

“Yes. If she is happy then things like a fetish or anything is trivial matter. Rather than that, what I want to ask is regarding your beloved princess.”

Hajime whose expression turned complicated from Adol’s large-hearted statement now made a doubtful expression from those words. If talking about his beloved princess then he couldn’t think of anyone except Yue.

“I had seen the image recording. I was surprised that the young vampire princess is alive. And then, for my granddaughter to love the same person with her, truly, fate is something mysterious. Princess Aleytia…no, she is Yue right now isn’t she. That girl is your most beloved correct?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

Adol didn’t really show any change of expression when he heard Hajime answering instantly. He just nodded. In exchange, the other dragon people narrowed their eyes dangerously. Ristas too right now looked like he wanted to raise an angry yell. Surely, they couldn’t stomach that Hajime was building a relationship that was more than friendship with Tio while saying that another woman was his most beloved.

“I too am a grandfather that is thinking of my granddaughter. At the occasion of the great persecution five hundred years ago, I swore to this child’s parents who lost their lives——to my son and his wife. That I will protect her without fail. Therefore, if you are saying that you cannot love Tio, even if Tio says that she doesn’t mind with that, as expected I cannot just accept that. The feeling of wanting to entrust the beloved granddaughter is what is called parental love isn’t that correct?”

“Indeed.”

Adol’s gaze stabbed straight at Hajime.

Surely Adol wanted to ask. What was the true feeling of Hajime toward Tio. Exactly because Adol understood that Tio would step into the Holy Precincts with Hajime, and also because he understood that he would commit to deadly combat against the apostles, in this time where it was possible that he

would part away forever with his granddaughter in this life, that he couldn't help but wanting to know about the partner that his granddaughter gave her heart to.

Hajime slowly ran his gaze at the surrounding. To Ristas and others of the dragon race, Shia and others, Adol. And then, lastly to Tio.

Tio blushed slightly from being stared directly by Hajime and she was going to take a step back from the pressure she felt.

But, Hajime's arm reached out before she could step back. When that arm caught the waist of Tio who was going to draw back, it then pulled Tio close to him strongly. It really looked like as though Hajime was saying that this woman belongs to me. Tio was turning redder and redder. She looked really meek to the degree that made one want to tsukkomi just what happened with the usual pervert.

Hajime faced Adol once more with his arm still embracing Tio. And then, he opened his mouth with a calm but powerful voice.

"Recently, everyone said it really often, that I am like a demon king."

"Hmm?"

"That's why, I will take everything that I want, and send flying everything that is in the way."

The outsiders went noisy. Adol was listening quietly. Hajime declared clearly to the listening Adol.

"I want Tio."

Tio who was embraced by Hajime twitched noticeably. Her eyes opened widely while she stared at Hajime wholeheartedly.

"No matter what Tio is thinking, that's already irrelevant. I have no intention to let her go now after this far. Indeed, Yue is my most beloved but…even so, I feel that Tio is lovely. That's why——"

"That's why?"

Adol asked. Hajime turned his gaze at Ristas and others for a moment, then he showed a fearless smile at Adol while declaring.

"Tio already belongs to me. If anyone cannot stomach that, then try to steal her with all your might. No matter when, no matter how many times, I'll take on anyone."

Those excessively unreasonable, selfish, and preposterous words made everyone who watched over the course of events with the dragon race people first on the lead to be lost for words. Only Shia and others were making an expression that seemed to say "Can't be helped huh".

And then, as for Adol who was curious of Hajime's true feeling,

"Certainly you are an incarnation of unreasonableness——just like a demon king in a fairy tale. Fufu-, I see. So my granddaughter has fallen into the hand of a demon king huh. In the hands of the demon king that might save the world. Kuhaha-"

He raised a laughing voice that sounded amused. After laughing like that for a while, he turned his gaze at Tio and nodded as though consenting to something.

“That’s a good face. I have never seen your expression like that in the village at all. It’s just like your explanation in the village, you are loved by everyone, and then you are in love with them.”

“Jii-sama. Exactly. Not only Goshujin-sama, I also love Yue and the others. And then, right now I’m convinced. That everyone also loves me. I am too happy that it feels like right now I can murder even a god by myself.”

Adol whose smile deepened even more from Tio’s reply calmly straightened his posture and turned his gaze at Hajime. And then he lowered his head.

“Then, demon king-dono. I ask you along with your beloved people, please take care of my granddaughter.”

“…Indeed, I have received your request. I will protect her until the end of this life of mine.”

Hajime’s way of talking returned back to honorific language once more, to that Adol looked like a weight had fallen off from his shoulder, he nodded with relieved expression and then turned on his heel toward Liliana and others. He apologized for taking time for his personal matter while urging them toward the conference room. He also took the opportunity to breathe life back into Ristas and others who had faltered from Hajime’s declaration and urged them to follow him.

Liliana and Aiko were directing expression that looked absurdly jealous, and possibly even greedy toward Hajime, but urged by the surrounding they helplessly returned back inside the fortress even while they kept sending glances back with reluctance.

The onlookers were scattering gradually with the disappearance of the leaders, but the remaining people, especially the classmates who had gathered unnoticed were sounding out gossips like “Damn, Nagumo is seriously an ero game’s MC” or “Haa haa, maou-sama(TN:Demon king-sama)…haa haa” or “That’s just too unreasonable…but, I also want someone to act that unreasonable for me!” or “Hajime-sama’s harem…if I added myself nonchalantly into there, it’s possible”.

Amidst such an atmosphere, Tio who was clinging on Hajime’s chest with slovenly expression “nihee~” softly separated herself from him.

“Goshujin-sama. Those were truly, truly joyful words. However, there is one thing that I wished to confirm. For Goshujin-sama to speak your feeling for me that clearly, surely that’s not because Goshujin-sama hath been thinking of the final possibility, is it?”

If those words came out from a feeling of him wanting to convey his feeling because he thought they might die in this battle, then Tio had to warn Hajime. But, based on what Hajime saw from Tio’s expression, it seemed that until the end it was nothing more than just her confirming it without her really believing that Hajime was thinking like that.

“A vow to be together in the time of death and thinking that we might die are different things. Naturally, the one who will die are those guys, not us. There is not even a speck of a chance for us to die. I merely didn’t want to take a half-assed attitude in front of your family.”

“Kufufu, I see I see. Then that’s fine. God or whatever isn’t worthy to be feared. After all I feel like I can defeat even Ehito alone if it’s the current me. Let’s take back Yue and then do ‘pii-‘ and ‘pii-‘ with everyone happily!”

“…That’s why, whether it’s Shia or you, in the end you girls just spoiled up everything.”

Behind Hajime, Shia was laughing “Ahaha, desuu~” shamelessly.

For the time being they changed the spot because they wanted to be spared of being a spectacle more than this. It was only the members of storming group that gathered at a corner of the fortress’s rooftop and spent their time to master the artifacts or resting. There was still a few more hours until the sunrise, but no one tried to take a nap. In this situation where it was unclear when the great invasion would begin, no matter how much they relaxed the subconscious tension couldn’t let their mind fall asleep.

In this kind of time, even Hajime who usually displayed a thick nerve, his sleepiness was naturally blown away when he thought of Yue. Right now, he was just earnestly polished his killing intent toward Ehito.

Before long the sunrise arrived. The face of the shining sun peeked out from the east horizon, and a large shadow stretched to the west.

The warm sunlight illuminated the world, at that time when the sun that blazed bright red completely revealed its appearance, Hajime quietly opened his closed eyes, and then he murmured.

“They came.”

It was at that moment.

The world was dyed reddish black and rumbled.

And then, ahead of the gaze that Hajime and the others directed, a crack ran on the sky of God Mountain, there the abyss peeked out its face.

It began.

For god, this was the world’s…

For mankind, this was the toyed history’s…

Beginning of the end.

Chapter 163 – Peerless Outbreak of War Without Self-Restraint

The world was dyed reddish black.

It wasn’t the orange color of the morning glow. It stirred up the people’s unease further, a color that forced anybody to bear instinctive revulsion that was awfully eerie, fanning up one’s fear. If it had to be said, it was the eye of a monster, as though the whole world was imprisoned inside the eyes of a monster. Even the beautiful sun that shined radiantly, right now it was merely a reddish black star floating in the east sky.

And then a strange sound was reverberating through the strange colored world. The world itself was rumbling. The ground too, the air too, the world was screaming while trembling with fear.

The people were made to understand that whether they wanted it or not, the end of the world was beginning. Amidst such an atmosphere, an even louder sound of destruction reverberated.

The soldiers, knights, mercenaries, demi-humans, everyone in the fortress trembled. Their gazes moved everywhere. Thereupon, on the sky above God Mountain something that looked like a line became visible. When the people focused their eyes in wonder, the line warped distortedly, then once again the line raised crackling sounds and spread in all directions.

“The sky… is splitting…”

Someone whispered that. It was truly a murmur that was right to the point. The distorted line occurring in the sky was a crack that ran right through space itself.

That crack fanned up the terror in people’s heart, while the sound of destruction was played to the world, the crack was slowly spreading.

“-, All hands-! Prepare to fight-!”

A command mixed with scolding was handed down toward the soldiers who were dumbfoundedly mute. It was the angry roar of Gahard whose voice was amplified using an artifact. It seemed that he also got knocked out of his wits. But as expected from the representative of a military country, he was the first one who pulled himself back together among the top brasses.

That command released the soldier from their binding. They moved all at once in order to fulfill the role that was given to them.

Even as the crack above God Mountain was increasing in size, by the time the soldiers were deployed, the space was finally completely pulverized along with a thunderous roar.

Fragments of space were blown away everywhere and sparkled like glass. Like a chasm that was opened in the ground, the abyss was peeking from that thing that materialized in the sky. It was a deeply thick darkness that was the exact opposite of the golden whirl that made one feel its solemnity which Ehito and the others used to return to the Holy Precincts. In place of the whirl there was something viscous like miasma spurting out.

From there, black rain was pouring down. No, it only looked like rain——it was a great number of monsters. From the chasm in the space the monsters were raining down on the summit of God Mountain. The numbers already surpassed tens of thousands. At any rate, it was in the amount that the soldiers who looked up from the ground could see it as black rain. It was a terrific number that easily reached millions, or possibly even tens of millions.

The heavy rain of black monsters painted the summit of God Mountain black in the blink of an eye, and then the blackness began to descend down like an avalanche.

Furthermore, from the chasm of space that was covered in black miasma, this time white rain was released horizontally. At the reddish black sky the white——no, the silver rain was really visible.

“The number of the apostles is also not half-baked, huh.”

The one who whispered with a grim look was Gahard. With his body wrapped in battle clothing, as the general of the allied force he came out to the front line together with the subordinates under his direct

control. A ‘telepathic communication’ from the supreme commander of the allied force, Liliana reached his ear.

{Your majesty Gahard. Please don’t go too far to the front. It’s fine for you to die only after the battle is over.}

{Hah, you really said that. But, the strongest man in the allied force has to fight at the very front. If I die then I die, you just need to use my death to blaze up the soldiers. You supreme commander and that goddess are for that sake right.}

{Good grief… your majesty, ‘goddess’ and ‘sword’ are going out. Just as planned, please take care.}

{Yeah-, leave it to me!}

The general of the allied forces, in a manner of speaking, was the supreme commander in the field. Originally, Gahard who was the top of a military country should become the supreme commander, but giving a reason that there was no way the most skilled man could just shut in himself inside with a war going on outside, he stubbornly refused to be stopped from going out.

Although it wasn’t like that, Liliana was unsuited to become the supreme commander. She was a royalty, in anticipation of the battle against the devil race in the future she learned tactic and strategy. Rather than Gahard whose character was for the front line, the girl who was extolled as the ‘Kingdom’s Prodigy’ was more suited instead to take command of the whole from the rear with an overlooking view.

Other than possessing the courage to run away from the capital alone, she also knew the importance of making a clear decision calmly; furthermore, in regard of barrier magic, she was excelling in base defense as an expert. And if she was accompanied with the skilled aides of each country, then it could be said that she was more than suited as a supreme commander whether in the aspect of status or morale raising.

And then, other than the general and the supreme commander, there was one more person who was given an important role.

“Everyone of the allied forces-. All of you brave warriors that stand up against the crisis of the world! Please don’t be scared! The divine protection of god is with us! We will be protected, all of us, from the evil god who tricked god and bared his fang against mankind right now-. In this point of time where everyone took up your weapon and stand in this place, all of you are already hero! Everyone of you are the warrior of god! Now-, let’s yell together with this ‘Apostle of God’ the ‘Goddess of Harvest’! We will not lose against evil no matter what-. What we are going to grasp is only ‘victory-!!”

Immediately, the soldiers of the allied force who was making tragic expression from terror while desperately holding down their trembling body, like a traveler who found an oasis after wandering in the desert for many days, their eyes shined with hope.

The ‘Goddess of Harvest’ pouring down her voice from the summit of the fortress, the flag bearer of the leaders of the allied force——Aiko, the soldiers directed their gaze that had recovered their strength and determination to her and stamped their feet all at once.

DON DON-, DON-. DON DON-, DON- The fifty hundred thousand soldiers who shook the ground rhythmically at the next moment roared in unison even without practice beforehand.

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “VICTORY! VICTORY!! VICTORY!!!“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “

“Ruin for the evil god! Glory for mankind!”

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “RUIN FOR THE EVIL GOD-!! GLORY FOR MANKIND-!!“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “

Aiko was desperately recalling the content of ‘You Can Do It, Agitator! Compilation of Lovely Speech Case by Case’ given to her by Hajime while sending her voice that was amplified by an artifact to the battlefield.

“The servant of the evil god is not worthy to be feared! Oh ‘my sword’! Show that proof right now!”

The instant Aiko yelled that, an amplified calm voice echoed through the whole battlefield.

“As you command, my goddess.”

Right after that, the soldiers who looked up to Aiko saw the silhouette that leaped up from behind Aiko.

White haired eye-patched black coated young man——Hajime was standing still on air where there was nothing, and then he lifted above his head a jewel that looked like diamond that he took out from somewhere. Then, that jewel shined radiantly like sun and illuminated the soldiers. Looking from their point of view, it was as though a halo was shining behind Aiko. This too was Hajime’s production.

Hajime floated a wide fearless grin.

A beat later, that happened.

A part of the reddish black sky momentarily flashed, instantly, a part of the mountain surface of God Mountain that was in the process of changing color from being covered by the avalanche of black monsters was entirely blown away along with tremendous thunderous roar.

Right after that, just when it seemed the sky flashed, many things were further raining down to the God Mountain, the mountain with a height of eight kilometer above the sea was crumbling just like a sand mountain created on the beach that got pushed down by a kid.

It was a bombing that poured down straight from heaven. But it wasn’t by missiles packed with explosives. What Hajime was doing was simply raining down large mass of metal lumps to free fall on God Mountain.

So to speak, it was Meteor Impact.

As expected, if Hajime made it drop from space then the impact would reach even the fortress, so he dropped the mass from inside the stratosphere, but even so the energy from several ton of metal lump freefalling had the destructive force that average explosive couldn’t match.

Furthermore, this attack was falling randomly in local area in the unit of few hundreds.

Along with thunderous roars that could rupture the ear drum, the highest peak of the sacred mountain that was a pride of the world was collapsing like a joke. Rain of monster? Rain of apostle? Then I’ll make

it rain meteors! It was as though such a thing was said. Of course, Hajime thought that the same golden whirl like before would manifest, so it was completely a coincidence that both sides were making rain.

However, as though to make the comparison between the strength of the two sides, the allied force's soldiers were shown the spectacle of the God Mountain crumbling before their eyes along with the extermination of several tens, hundreds of thousands of monsters, their reaction was…

" " " " " " " " " "_____" " " " " " " " " "

Trembling. Not from fear. From joy. And also from the fighting spirit welling up inside their chest.

Right after that, shouts that weren't even losing against the thunderous roar of the God Mountain along with the monsters' extermination were raised, it even felt like the shouts could drive away the fierce cloud of dust approaching them.

" " " " " " " " " "UOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHH————!!!!!! " " " " " " " " " "

From the bottom of their stomach, while their body trembling from the scene that came out exactly from legend, they roared from the bottom of their stomachs. They stamped their feet *DON DON*, heightening their fighting spirit without end!

" " " " " " " " " "AIKO-SAMA BANZAI! GODDESS-SAMA BANZAI!! " " " " " " " " " "

——God Mountain demolition right after the start of battle.

The enemy had purposefully taught them from where they were going to attack. Then, it was fine to just blow away the place where they were coming out from, that was how it went. Of course, Hajime had also prepared something else in case it was a lie, but from what he saw at Ehito's expression that was full of superiority complex in the end, Hajime presumed that the possibility that he was lying was low.

The destruction of the God Mountain made the movement of the apostles in the sky also stop as expected. However, in the next moment they approached the fortress with a fierce speed while matching their movements like a mass of flying birds without a single disorder.

The capital that was in a half-destroyed state due to the crumbling of the god mountain was further enveloped by the approaching cloud of dust, without stopping the dust approached the fortress like a sandstorm. To that, Hajime took out a different jewel and made it shine.

"We were thoroughly made a fool by you guys before. There is no way this is the end with just this much right? Just like Icarus, fall down with your wings burning, all of you puppets."

Right after that heavy rain of light that split apart the atmosphere poured down.

——Sunlight convergence laser Burst Hyperion

The restored annihilation weapon released light of ruin from the sky. Not just a single line, at the altitude of ten kilometers, a total of seven Burst Hyperions were floating, controlled by the jewel that Hajime was holding, with pillars of light piercing down.

Like the tower of Babel, seven pillars of light connecting heaven and earth were swallowing in one go the apostles who were drawing near to the allied forces in a straight line from the chasm in the space.

The apostles who were annihilated unaware were uncountable.

There were a lot of apostles who attempted to defend by deploying their silver wings clad in disintegration ability, but this improved version of Hyperion that had been explosively evolved in heat quantity, convergence rate, lasting time, and so on couldn't be compared with the previous Hyperion. Against this even the characteristic ability of the apostles were pierced and their god constructed bodies were turned into cinders.

The apostles who somehow escaped from the firing lines and the apostles who only now came out from the chasm in the space stopped still, but a moment later they soared to the sky with terrific momentum. They flapped their silver wings and flew along the pillars of light where ahead of them were the astonishing weapons that annihilated their fellow apostles in hundreds.

"Don't be reserved. There is still more to come, eat up to your heart's content. Stuff yourself until your whole body burst out yeahh-"

Using the 'distant viewing stone' loaded on Burst Hyperion, Hajime saw the figures of the ascending apostles, his lips warped ferociously while saying that. At the same time, the diamond jewel shined even further.

Then, from all the Burst Hyperion that had total length of around five meters, several small type bits——'Mirror Bits' were flying out, they went toward the surface or scattered to the surrounding. The bits with isosceles triangle shape and size around thirty centimeters had crimson gem installed on their surface.

The mirror bits scattered as though to evade the charging apostles, to that the apostles frowned suspiciously for a moment, but seemingly judging that it would suffice to destroy the Burst Hyperion where they bits were coming from first no matter what scheme the bits served, they ignored the bits and continued charging ahead.

And then, the apostles focused their silver magic power, and at that instant where they were going to attempt to destroy the seven weapons emplaced at the sky with disintegration bombing,

"-!? This is-——"

One of the apostles that leaked out that voice had her head erased before she could finish talking.

It was by the laser *right from behind*.

The firing of Burst Hyperion stopped just for a moment. Immediately after, the lasers split into branches like a scattered shot and rained down to the ground… was how it looked like but an instant later, lasers from all directions filled the whole sky to the brim.

That was a cage that was instantly created from laser. Countless lasers from directions that were totally different from Burst Hyperion's positions were expanding through the whole sky as though laying out three dimensional web.

"Kuh, so it's that small artifacts-"

One of the apostle who attempted to defend by deploying her maximum disintegration ability through her silver wings that wrapped around her body spoke out a conjecture that was nearly conviction as

though spitting out, to that surely it was just auditory hallucination, but the words of the irregular that said “Correct” echoed in her ear with teasing tone.

Yes, the role of the mirror bits were to reflect the sunlight convergence laser of Burst Hyperion which was their mother machine. With that, they exterminated the enemy from every direction. The countless bits were constantly changing position and further reflected the reflected lasers, creating a cage of laser that covered the sky and realized a diversified random shooting that was hard to predict due to the irregularity.

By the way, the bits had the word ‘mirror’ attached to their name, but they weren’t reflecting the laser using mirror but by making use of space distortion. Using that it was also possible to bend the laser in sharp angles. In a glance, it looked nothing more than a reflection, hence the naming.

“Well, that’ll take care of that.”

Due to the omni-directional laser attack without pause, the apostles reflexively deployed defense of silver wings and their charge slowed down, seeing that Hajime snorted while murmuring that.

And then, through the ‘distant viewing stone’ Hajime sent a fearless grin at the apostles whose expressions were somewhat visibly distorting hatefully. He then operated the jewel and dropped something shining the size of a fist from Burst Hyperion.

Like a morning dew that dripped down from a leaf, the seven shining tears were dropped right in the middle of great number of apostles who currently were beginning to move in the attempt to break through the cage of laser with their silver wings deployed in defense.

“Disappear all at once.”

Right at that moment when Hajime whispered in small voice,

DOOOOOOOOOOOOOOON-!!!!

Flowers of sun bloomed at the reddish black sky.

——Treasure Warehouse to exclusively store converged sunlight Rose Helios

What Hajime dropped were special treasure warehouses that stored sunlight which was focused until the limit. It was different with the treasure warehouse that was built internally to shot lasers, so to speak it was a large scale heat bomb that made use of the suns energy by self-destructing to release all the stored energy at once.

This artifact was a treasure where one Burst Hyperion could only have one of it loaded in them, but its power was guaranteed. The heat that was continuously converged was liberated and caused a large explosion like sun flare, the reddish black sky was painted like it was afternoon.

The radiance that made one thought that seven suns were appearing at the same time covered the sky, immediately after that, tremendously powerful shockwave and heat wave poured down.

With this, not only the apostles who aimed to destroy the Burst Hyperion, other apostles who were following behind and the apostles who just came out from the crack in the space were also blown away

altogether like leaves. Not only that, but the enormous dust cloud which was approaching the fortress due to the God Mountain's collapse was also washed back.

Naturally that force also assaulted the fortress, but the force was barely blocked by the shining membrane that covered the whole fortress. It was thanks to the 'Great Barrier' that was relocated from the capital to here. The former great barrier would surely be unable to endure the annihilation grade artifact of Hajime, but the current great barrier that had been improved seemed to be able to endure if it was just the shockwave.

The Rose Helios that displayed sublime destruction which surpassed expectation actually made Hajime who was the creator himself to be the one who was sweating coldly the most but… the result was no harm reached his ally so it was alright.

"Uhaa, is has become something amazing isn't iit~"

"Hajime-kun who completely stopped restraining himself change even the topography isn't he…"

"… If an example is made with earth terminology, then it's like Everest got annihilated and nuclear bombs are fired wildly. When the fight is over, we have to make him have restraint with all of our strength."

"… Either way, Shizushizu is going to have hardships. Suzu will also cooperate as much as possible okay. It feels like Suzu can hear the crying of earth from here."

"This world is already teary eyed… When I reach the other side, I'm gonna punch Kouki flying right away. If I don't fight him first… if Kouki get into a fight with Nagumo, not even a dust will remain from him."

Shia and the others leaked out their impression. All of them threw their gaze at the beyond and their lips were half-smiling. They knew that Hajime planned to launch preemptive attacks at the start of the battle, they also knew that he would do that by using 'meteor impact' and 'converged sunlight laser', but never even in their wildest dream did they even imagined that the eight kilometer mountain would be annihilated and pseudo suns would materialize in the sky in multiple numbers even if only temporarily.

Furthermore, behind such Shia and the others…

"How's that, Jii-sama! That is my honored spouse! Isn't it amazing!"

"… aah, yep, I guess. That's really super awesome."

"Cl, Clan head. I understand your feeling, but your speech is… no, nothing, please pay it no heed."

Tio puffed up her chest proudly while Adol was opening his eyes wide looking like the shocked expression that came out in a shoujo manga of a long time ago. A close aide made a tsukkomi at the clan head's discomposed tone, but it seemed that he gave up in the middle. Ristas was extremely surprised that he was unable to stand up with his soul coming out from his mouth. (TN: Shoujo manga is a manga for girl)

Below the fortress was also noisy. Especially the rabbit ear group, they were making a hectic uproar.

"Hyahha-!! As expected bosss! He does impossible things so calmly!"

“Come on you trash! We are gonna break all of you into pieces yeah!!”
“Aaaaaan, bosss! Please hold meeeeeee! It’s unbearableee!”

“Red Flash Rondo!! Banzai!!” (TN: Akaki Senkyou no Rinbukyoku)

“Mad Whirlwind of White Fang!! Yiihaaa!!” (TN: Shiroki Souga no Kyouhyou)

“No, the nickname until now is not enough anymore! … Something, something that is more worthy for boss…”

“How about Demon King of White Night that Bring About Demise!” (TN: Shuuen Motarasu Byakuya no Maou)

“No, about that Ultimate Supreme Emperor of Death and Chaos is better!” (TN: Shi to Konton no Kyokuhatei)

“Why there is no crimson in there! It’s Ultimate Destruction God of Deep Crimson Gleaming Sky!” (TN: Shinku Kouten no Kyokuhashin)

It seemed that when the battle was over Hajime nicknames would become jumbled all over.

Amidst such resounding yells, Aiko yelled with a voice that sounded somewhat cramped yet still powerful.

“Thi, this is, the strength of my sword! Victory is together with us!”

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ VICTORY! VICTORY! VICTORY! “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “

Following that, Gahard somehow pulled himself together and took command with a faint smile. His loud voice resounded all over to the degree that made one think whether he really needed any artifact to amplify his voice.

“All hands, ready your weapon!! The target is above! Don’t let the goddess’s sword take all the glory! Exactly as the goddess said, every single one of us is a hero! Fight until the last moment! Destroy every single enemy! Proove the strength of us ‘humans’!”

“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO-!!!“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “

A tremendous yell was raised. At the same time, the soldiers aimed the heavy arms they were provided with each of their roles to the sky. Their morale was at the highest peak. There was nobody who was trembling in fear anymore; in exchange, their body was trembling with a warrior excitement.

Teeth were clenched tightly, light of determination shined inside those eyes.

At the sky, the apostles who barely avoided destruction arranged their formation, and then new apostles were overflowing further from the chasm in the space. Several hundred apostles were supposedly annihilated by the previous attack, but perhaps the apostle of god was in inexhaustible supply.

Therefore, exactly because of that from now on would be the authentic war between mankind and the pawn of god.

Looking at the state of the allied force, Aiko released a sigh that couldn't be noticed.

"Sensei, that was a splendid speech. As expected from the goddess of harvest."

"Nagumo-kun… I already, don't understand what I should say."

Aiko looked over her shoulder at the voice behind her while floating an exasperated smile. While shrugging to that, Hajime handed over the jewel to operate Burst Hyperion to Aiko.

It was the important jewel which brought about that large-scale destruction. Aiko accepted it timidly. From now on Burst Hyperion would be operated by Aiko's hand as much as possible. The one who was the worthiest to handle the sunlight was exactly the 'Goddess of Harvest'.

After glancing at Aiko who was trembling with fear, Hajime turned his gaze at Kaori.

"Your face is an apostle, but the color of your hair looks like Kaori huh. Yeah, as expected, black hair suited Kaori more."

"Ehehe, is that so? Then we have to finish this quickly so I can return to my former body."

Exactly as Hajime said, the current Kaori wasn't silver haired but she became black haired even with Nointo's body.

This was so that she wasn't mistaken with the apostles, the cause was the disguise artifact that Hajime prepared. The color of her magic power was also disguised, so currently when Kaori spread her wings what appeared would black silver wings. Her outfit also had black tone, so her appearance was just like a fallen angel. Perhaps it could be said to be a fitting look for an angel serving the demon king.

"I'm relying on you for the rest okay?"

"Yep. This side is fine. I will protect the place for Hajime-kun to come back here. I also won't let anyone to lay their hand on Myuu-chan and others anymore. That's why… please, save Yue."

"Yeah. Look forward to it. When we come back, I'll toy with you together with Yue."

"Geez-, Hajime-kun you meanie-!"

Kaori made an angry look at Hajime who was making fun of her. But, her gaze was strong, and also extraordinarily gentle. And it was also similar with Hajime, both of them understood well the immenseness of the trust that they directed at each other.

Behind Hajime, Shia, Tio, Shizuku, Suzu, and Ryuutaro walked closer. While Kaori and Shizuku took each other's hands with somewhat yuri-yuri atmosphere (TN: Lilies on their background), Hajime's gaze moved to the surroundings.

The people inside the fortress could observe the outer part really well while being inside the fortress itself due to the countless crystal displays installed. But right now, on the contrary, the displays were reflecting the interior of the fortress's command room and the people inside there like Liliana and the others, and then Kam and others who were the leaders of each force too.

"Princess. Use the anti-apostle artifact well okay. After all, I entrusted them believing in your competence you know?"

{Ple, please don't put pressure on me. Well, we are going to make it somehow. Nagumo-sa——no, Hajime-san, may luck be with you.}

Liliana at the other side of the display smiled while nodding at Hajime. Hajime nodded to that and then moved his gaze to Kam who was projected on the same display.

"Kam. There is no need for tedious talk after this far. … Go rampage."

{Ku-ku-ku-, an exciting order, thank you very much. I certainly acknowledge that. All of us Haulia will be waiting in anticipation for boss's god killing.}

Hajime and Kam exchanged fearless smiles at each other. And then, Hajime's gaze further moved to all the people who were visible in that place——Ranzi, Alfrerick, Iruwa, the top leaders from each country, then he lightly shrugged and declared.

"Then, I'll go for a bit."

Even though he was going to step into the territory of a god after this, those words were awfully light. But, mysterious strength could be felt from those words. It made them unconditionally believed, that if it was this man then he would be able to accomplish anything. It was that kind of words.

That was why nobody talked much. They nodded strongly in return and said just two words.

" " "See you." " "

Immediately after, Hajime and the others flew up together.

Under their feet were skyboards. They could also go using 'Air Force', but their destination——the chasm in space was at the altitude of eight kilometers. They had no intention to be pushed back by sheer number or spending more time. They were breaking through in one go stressing on the speed!

Looking at the six streaks of magic power light in six colors ascending to the sky, cheers were raised from the allied force. It was the sally of the 'Goddess's Sword". The hope of humanity! Like that, yells of hope tore their throats toward the sky.

There, the first wave of apostles appeared as though to block their route. Perhaps because right after the invasion start the actual first wave had been annihilated by impossible methods, the apostles didn't charge ahead recklessly. It was clear that they intended to fight while observing the situation.

"Hah, you all got really jittery, huuh. You think you can stop me with that kind of cold feet aa!?"

Already, there were around twenty apostles gathering ahead of them, regardless of the twin swords and their silver wings which were deployed fully, Hajime didn't slow down at all. Far from that, he accelerated the skyboard further. And then, while telling Shia and others to ready their weapons using 'Telepathy', Hajime took out a huge artifact from 'Treasure Warehouse II' and shouldered it.

"I'll turn you all into Swiss cheese!"

Immediately after, a crimson storm attacked the apostles.

The violence that could only be expressed like that pulverized the apostles blocking the path like a joke.

Of course, the apostles possessed disintegration ability, they had the silver wings of protection and huge swords that severed all thing with disintegration. Therefore, the apostles wordlessly and expressionlessly tried to resist using those. But, such things were easily smashed literally just like paper scraps.

KIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII-!!

Huge gun barrels that rotated in high speed while resounding particular sound. Brilliantly vivid magic power light sparked wildly. Extremely thick crimson flashes that might even pierce the sky surged.

——Gatling Pile Bunker

That was the true form of the weapon that scattered twenty apostles without difficulty. Different from the pile bunker until now, the loaded pile bunker was two sizes smaller. But, its might didn't decrease for even a bit, in a second twenty electromagnetically accelerated shots spiraled forward and the huge and super heavy black pike pulverized the target.

Right now, just by facing each other the apostles couldn't hope to stop Hajime's advance! Only by wringing out their intellect, piling up study, and resolve with a firm will like humans, they would be allowed to finally stand in front of this opponent for the first time. That was how wide the difference was!

The apostles who stiffened for a moment in amazement then decided, a pincer attack from left and right! Like that they circled while trailing afterimages behind.

"We cannot leave this only to Hajime-san!"

"Indeed!"

Shia and Tio readied themselves to deal with that.

But two apostles that brandished their large sword clad in silver magic power toward Shia and Tio. At the next moment, their heads were blown away by the flash that tore the sky before they were falling down spinning.

"Fue?"

"Wha, what?"

Shia and Tio stared in puzzlement with their spirit dampened. Not only the two, Hajime and the others also looked over their shoulder following the line of the flash. They had already reached the altitude of five kilometers so nobody understood other than Shia whose body was reinforced and Hajime who possessed 'Far Sight', those two perfectly saw it.

The fortress on the ground, at a corner of the rooftop, while holding a very long sniper that was fixed directly on the floor of the fortress, Pal-kun (ten years old), nickname 'Bardfelt of Certain Ruin' was sending them a thumbs up.

Not just Bardfelt-kun. The sniping experts even among the Haulia which was put together into a squad were readying the 'Electromagnetic Acceleration Super Long Range Anti-Material Rifle' that Hajime provided for each one of them while floating fearless smiles.

In the first place, these were the fellows who performed super accurate sniping even with just a crossbow. With scope that was enchanted with ‘Far Sight’ and ‘Foresight’, if they could see the future position of the apostles then a five-kilometer sniping was possible. Though honestly, Hajime was feeling a little unbelieving.

In Hajime and Shia’s eyes, they could see the glint of Bardfelt-kun’s eyes narrow across the scope. At the same time, they could somehow see what he was saying from the movement of his lips.

{Boss! Anego! Just leave clearing the path to us!} (TN: Anego=big sister, this way of calling usually used by delinquent or thug.)

Perhaps that was what he said. As though to proof that, the apostles who planned to pincer attack were shot through one after another by the flashes soaring from below.

As expected, one shot one kill was impossible after the apostle became on guard, but even so they ate considerable damage, they became unable to attack carelessly and somehow their face looked vexed.

Even if the apostles tried to use long range bombarding or large scale magic, Bardfelt-kun and others sensitively sensed it and they prioritized sniping at the apostle trying to do that. Their attack was interrupted, and even if they tried to attack forcefully regardless, Hajime and others would easily endure such attack.

“My clan is rapidly getting superhumanized desuu…”

“Perhaps, it’s not only Shia anymore that can be called as special truly.”

“Everyone that got involved with Hajime all become distanced from normal humans, isn’t it…”

“He, hey, Shizushizu. Suzu is still a human, right? Right?”

“Perhaps it’s already too late for me yeah~”

While riding their skyboard, the enemy at the front was dealt by Hajime’s Gatling pile bunker, while the enemy to the left and right were dealt with a terrifying degree of accurate sniping, so Shia and the others who only needed to intercept, evade, and defend minimally had time to have somewhat distant looks while murmuring that kind of thing to each other.

While the apostles were unable to even hinder them properly; finally, Hajime and the others arrived at the chasm in space that spurted out the muddy black miasma.

“Chih, even though its appearance changed, the ability is still the same huh.”

Hajime clicked his tongue. Exactly as he said, similar with the golden whirl, the black miasma was blocking Hajime and the others’ progress.

“You guys, hold back the puppets behind! {Sensei, you can hear right? Send the mirror bits over here!}. Taniguchi, you put a barrier on me!”

{Ro, roger.}

“Go, got it.”

Hajime was giving out instruction to Aiko on the surface and Suzu, and also at the other members while taking out a short sword from his breast pocket.

Although the item had the shape of a short sword but it didn't have any edge at all, rather it was made from a crystal that looked brittle.

It was 'Degraded Version Crystal Key'. Based on his experience when creating the real crystal key, Hajime produced with his all this short sword that possessed the effect to interfere with space. It didn't have the power to open a gate toward the Holy Precincts, but if it was just the power to lockpick a locked door then this item could do it.

Hajime's body became clad in vivid crimson. And then he poured the immense magic power of 'Limit Break' into the degraded version crystal key that used the very small amount of god crystal's fragment discovered at the abyss of Orcus, activating its ability.

"This time for sure, I'll pass through no matter what!"

Hajime yelled and stabbed that short sword at the miasma wall.

Creak, creak Such a sound came out, the degraded crystal key in trying to break the wall of miasma causing ripples. Hajime's crimson magic power also roared trying to blow away the miasma.

But, there a silver shining large sword thrust out from inside the miasma. The large sword of apostle.

Even while Hajime held his ground to break the miasma, naturally the swarm of apostles was still coming out from there. Hajime himself was pouring all his strength to break the miasma so he couldn't take any considerable action.

{I won't let you!!}

"Don't get in the way!"

That was why Aiko and Suzu were there.

The mirror bits deployed around Hajime and others were guiding the laser from Burst Hyperion and blocked the approach of the apostles like a barrier.

And then Suzu also waved her iron fans gently on her skyboard. Living up to her reputation of barrier master, a square shining shield thirty-centimeters large was invoked instantly, the barrier didn't block the large sword of the apostle that slipped through the laser net, but diverted the trajectory as though the barrier surface was slippery. This was because Suzu understood that defending the enemy's disintegration ability from the front was disadvantageous.

Behind Hajime, Shia and others were also buying time by putting importance on handling the enemy rather than defeating them. Apostles were overflowing from the miasma as though they were unlimited, if the scene was seen from slightly distant spot, surely it would look like Hajime and the others were enveloped in silver cocoon.

The great numbers of apostles attacked clad in silver magic power to remove the insolent people who were trying to step into the Holy Precincts. Shia and the other somehow held out right now, but with the current pace they would surely get swallowed by pure numbers in less than a minute.

For that reason, Hajime ignored all the attacks of the apostles. He entrusted his back, his life, everything to Shia and the others. He turned his whole mind only to advance forward.

“OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO-!!!”

A shout burst from Hajime’s mouth. Hajime’s magic power further increased. The degraded version crystal key condensed the vivid crimson and got dyed with deep crimson. At the same time, cracks ran creakingly as though the key was screaming unable to endure the large power.

The cracks on the degraded version crystal key was widening second by second as though giving the notification that its life span was up already. But, Hajime further poured his magic power. The apostles who were breaking through even with half their body erased by laser launched silver feathers that disintegrated even Suzu’s barrier, cutting Hajime’s cheek and gouging his limbs.

Shia and the others were also bearing wounds from the overwhelming amount of attacks and their limited battle scope.

As expected, were they really unable to break through. Was the power of god unmatched…

If the people here were ‘average’, surely such thinking would pass in their mind. But, if they were people with such good understanding, then in the first place they wouldn’t be here. That was why, they yelled. Even while injured, even with enemies surrounding them from all sides.

“We can do this! If it’s Hajime-san!”

“Exactly, Goshujin-sama!”

“It’s fine! There is no such thing that can possibly stop you!”

“Gooo! Nagumo-kun!”

“Nagumooo! Smash it uuup!”

To those yells of Shia and others, Hajime was…

“Obviously-. Those guys that got in my way, I’ll destroy them, anything and everythiiiiiing!!”

Right after that…

creak A sound resounded.

But, that wasn’t the sound of the degraded crystal key. It was from the invisible wall before his eyes, from the crack in space that spurted out miasma. The tip of the degraded crystal key plunged into the wall. With that spot as the center, ripples were spreading.

——Yue-

Following his desiring heart, Hajime twisted the crystal short sword.

Then, with the stabbed point as the center, space distorted flabbily, opening an ellipse hole.

The path to the Holy Precincts was opened.

“-, you guys! Here we go!”

“Yes desu!”

“Yes!”

“Roger!”

“Yep!”

“Ou-!”

The command that was given along with Hajime’s fearless smile was affirmed by everyone with the same smile floating on their faces and a nod.

Right after that, the swarm of apostles descended on them.

But, the figure of Hajime and the others were already gone from between the apostles.

After that, there were only the sparkles emitted by the remains of the broken degraded crystal key and the gate that was closing even now.

Chapter 164 – Holy Precincts

A world that was richly colored.

That was the scenery that leapt into the eyes of Hajime and the others who stepped in into the Holy Precincts.

There was no end that could be confirmed. Various colors mixed in this space. It was as though they were lost inside a world within a bubble.

In that mysteriously colorful space, there was a chalk white path stretching straight forward. No, rather than calling it a path, it was like the top of a dam wall, it was more correct to express their location as ‘above a huge straight wall’.

Hajime and the others were taken aback for a moment. Despite so, they stored the skyboard that became ragged from the apostles’ attack into ‘Treasure Warehouse II’ and stood on the chalk white path. They couldn’t see any apostles even after looking around. It appeared the space that Hajime connected to using the degraded crystal key was a different place from the place that contained the apostles and monsters. They had resolved to clash with a great amount of apostles and monsters as far as their eye could see right after infiltrating, so this could be said as fortunate.

“What a mysterious space. I cannot grasp the sense of distance.”

Shia gave her impression while peeking down from the edge of the path. Just as those words sounded, even as she peeked below, the ground or the bottom of the wall were unclearly being swallowed by the extremely colorful space. Even the path straight ahead, after a certain distance, became swallowed by the colorful space that made it hard to confirm the distance.

“I guess it won’t end well if you fall down huh. Everyone, be careful okay.”

Everyone nodded briskly at Hajime’s warning. Like that they all began to run following after Hajime while staying vigilant of the surrounding.

They were traveling at high speed following the chalk white path in the atmosphere that was filled with uneasy silence. The ‘Compass of Guidance’ showed that Yue’s whereabouts was ahead of the chalk white path. Therefore they dashed believing on that, although there was not a single thing they could use to confirm the distance so they became doubtful whether they were really advancing forward.

If not for the compass that was teaching Hajime that the distance to Yue was closing even for just a little, perhaps even he would also feel doubt.

They advanced the path for several dozen minutes where no end could be seen with few words.

Finally, a change happened.

“It’s coming-. Bombardment!”

Shia’s rabbit ears stood up straight all of a sudden, at the same time she gave a warning. Regardless of their vigilance, everyone other than Shia was completely taken by surprise. It was the proof that Shia’s ‘Future Sight’ was activated, at the same time it also meant that the attack was a risky one that could possibly wipe them out.

Right after that, without any advance warning, silver radiant flashes attacked Hajime and the others from all directions. It was a meteor shower of death without a single gap, conveying clearly how no place of escape was left behind.

“Gather!”

Hajime’s angry roar flew. Everyone reflexively approached Hajime’s side. At the same time, Hajime took out a huge shield from ‘Treasure Warehouse II’. And then that shield which was manifested in empty air pierced the ground while magic power was poured into it.

As the result, *Gashun! Gashun!* such sound was raised, metal plates were sliding from the inside of the large shield in great speed. In the blink of eye the plates formed a dome that covered Hajime and the others. Metal plates that looked like scales stretched, it was variable large shield ‘Aidion’.

The moment the last metal plate slid into place and Hajime and co were completely covered, the flashes from all directions finally arrived. There was almost no impact. The attack was like a laser, the surface of Aidion was turning into dust. Obviously, the cause was the disintegration ability of the apostles.

But such thing was obvious the moment there was silver light. For that reason, Hajime chose the option of omni-direction defense with this Aidion.

“Hah, just try it if you think you can penetrate this.”

Hajime whispered while smiling fearlessly inside Aidion where there was the illumination of green light stone installed. That was the expression of his confidence. An absolute confidence that the likes of the apostle wouldn’t be able to penetrate his improved defense.

In front of the brutal characteristic ability of the apostles which was like a foul play, those words were something too insolent.

Normally.

Yes, even while Hajime was spouting out those insolent words, Aidion was completely blocking the disintegration bombardment. No, more accurately the shield's part that was disintegrated was regenerating. It went without saying that the cause was regeneration magic. 'Restoration Stone' that was enchanted with regeneration magic was continuously regenerating the part of Aidion that was turned to dust as though time was rolled back.

Of course, the disintegration ability of the apostles was at the level where a building would become dust in an instant, so no matter how much regeneration magic was enchanted the outcome would be that the item got blown away before it could show any effect.

However, this Aidion was similar with 'Sky Severance' where it was a composite shield made of several layers of adamantium inserted with restoration stone, furthermore, Hajime's 'Vajra' was also reinforcing it. In other words, even with one layer disintegrated, if the second, third, and fourth layer could buy time even for a second then the restoration stone could display its effect. Therefore, even with that disintegration ability, the apostles couldn't hope to penetrate it.

"You guys, save your strength for the time being. If it's just this many apostles then I'll deal with them."

"Eh? Deal with them…"

Shizuku was putting strength into the hand holding the black katana in the preparation of battle against apostle swarm once more, but Hajime's words resounded as though to dampen her spirit. Shizuku reflexively asked back, but inside the large shield that was illuminated faintly by green light stone, looking at Hajime's expression that supported the large shield——that look which looked like a wild beast made her words got caught up in her throat.

Right after that, the pressure that pushed on Aidion suddenly vanished. The all-out bombardment of the apostles was over.

Hajime transferred Aidion into 'Treasure Warehouse II', right after that the apostles showed their figure as though they were oozing out from the colorful space while making ripples. All of the apostles were clad in silver magic power, showing their seriousness right from the beginning. They sent narrowed gaze at Hajime who endured their all-out bombardment, in an instant…

——A curb stomp began.

DOPAAAAAAN-, at the same time when the familiar bursting sound roared, six apostles' head easily exploded like a joke.

"-!?"

It was a swift defeat unbecoming for god's apostle.

The apostles who lost six of their sister right at the moment when they made their entrance gulped audibly. The crimson flash that gouged the apostles' head certainly attacked faster than the gun sound, but it should be possible to evade if it was the apostle in full power state clad in silver light.

The cause that negated the apostles' evasion ability could be understood from the fact that all the six victims were all the people who blinked in that instant.

Hajime was taking the opening of the apostles' mind. The number of the apostles who appeared from the space was nearly fifty people. Hajime confirmed all of them instantly and aimed simultaneously only at the blinking apostles with pinpoint precision…

Hajime had survived many battles against the apostles, that was the reason this special move with difficulty level that was like threading the eye of a needle was working. There was no way the apostles could understand what happened.

Because of that, they were unable to understand the reason why their sisters were shot without being unable to do anything, this too caused their head to be soaked in confusion for an instant.

DOPAAAN

With that four more people died. Their head exploded and fell on the ground like an insect with their wings clipped.

"Kuh, three people are to chant-. The rest continue on!"

One of the apostles gave out instruction while grinding her teeth with the usual expressionless face crumbling. It appeared that she was the manager who handed down the command even among the apostles. The remaining apostles obeyed the instruction and moved all at once.

The apostle that gave instruction——Zekst swung her twin large swords once and then took flight instantly with her silver wings flapped. She charged at Hajime while leaving behind afterimages.

But, to such apostle, the small murmur of Hajime reached her clearly.

"…Hee, so you are the captain."

"__ __"

Amidst a large number of apostles flying around with countless afterimages filling the space to the limit, Hajime's eye glint accurately caught Zekst's figure.

And then, Hajime and Zekst's gaze entangled inside the world where the rich colors looked fading and dull, right after that, slowly, and even slower inside Zekst's mind, Hajime's mouth…split.

At that moment, Zekst realized. This world where the flow of time became slow right now, wasn't something produced because of her great speed, but it was the phenomenon of revolving lantern that someone watched at their dying moments. The reason of her realization was because, even while she was getting aware of the slowly approaching bullet clad in crimson toward her in the real world, the images of the many secret maneuverings 'the apostle of god' had carried out until now in all countries toward the people were also passing through her mind.

All apostles shared their memory with each other. Even if it wasn't something that Zekst personally did, but something that 'apostle' did was something that Zekst did. …Zekst thought. Were the apostles who were destroyed before she also saw the same scene like this? The scene, of the people who they had been toying with until now, were now looking down at them mockingly.

Zekst's body was accurately moving even while watching the revolving lantern. Her neck moved by itself trying to evade the flying bullet by twisting aside. But, mysteriously even with that Zekst was convinced that the approaching bullet would still pierce her.

And then, that conviction was proved right within an instant. The moment Zekst twisted her neck, of all thing, the bullet before her eyes shifted its trajectory slightly. Its path was accurately heading to Zekst's temple.

'Aa, really, what an irregular…'

After murmuring such thing inside her heart, in the end Zekst felt an impact, along with that her consciousness fell into darkness.

At the same time when Zekst fell, further seven apostles also fell on the ground with their head similarly blown away.

Hajime glanced at that scene while rotating Donner & Schlag in gun spin, then he scattered more bullets of death to all directions.

Although because Hajime's arms rotation and the reloading speed were too fast, an outsider looking would only be able to see acrobatic gun spins repeating all the time. The realization of Hajime's killing intent was displayed only by the fact that the scattered crimson flashes were shooting through the foreheads of the apostles without the slightest deviation.

"Wh, why-"

Unable to endure, one of the apostles who wasn't shot down yet spoke with rough voice and words that could be taken as a question or escaping reality.

It was natural for her to be like that. They were the 'apostle of god'. The sword of god that the likes of mankind had no hope to oppose. They were an existence that could trample the world equally like a natural disaster with just a single one of them! And yet, why, how they could be easily exterminated like this, dropping out just like flies…. Impossible. There was no way this kind of unrealistic sight could exist!

Right after that, a flash flew toward that apostle.

With an unknown emotion welling up inside her, that apostle drew a slash at the air trying to bisect that light with her shining large sword. The information that Hajime's bullet which generated impact could crack their large sword with one attack in the previous battle was naturally also shared with this apostle, therefore she decided not to 'make her large sword into shield' but to 'cut down the bullet'.

Like that, the beautiful silver trajectory split the crimson flash…was how it should be.

Instead, the result that came out was the explosion of the apostle's head. Just before the apostle's mind sunk into darkness, she whispered inside her stretched out perception.

'The light…slip through?……'

It wasn't unreasonable for her to have that misapprehension.

——Combined Metamorphosis-Creation Transmutation Special Bullet Living Bullet

That was the true form of the attack that slipped through the apostles' evasion and large swords.

This 'Living Bullet' was a special bullet enchanted with metamorphosis magic, the simple explanation was that the bullet could listen to the command of the user——it was literally a living bullet.

Hajime developed this bullet after understanding that the sealing stone and the pseudo scorpion in the abyss were created by blending organic matter and inorganic matter, so simply put the bullet was a living golem in bullet shape that executed a simple order.

This time the command that Hajime gave was just one. 'Hit the aimed place', that was all. It was a small bullet, so even though they listened to order but they had no ego. So to speak it was like a program. Evade if there was an obstacle in front of the target, chase if the target moved. That was all they could do. The bullet couldn't make U-turn if they passed the target and chased endlessly, it was also unable to circle around if a wall was made with silver wings to shot the apostle at the back of their head.

But, even so, the electromagnetically accelerated flash that reached the target within an instant corrected its trajectory just a few meters before it reached the target. No matter how unfair the perception ability and reaction speed the apostle had, there was no way they could evade or anything.

If the apostle tried to cut the bullet using their large sword but the bullet changed trajectory smoothly, it wasn't unreasonable for the apostle to mistake that the bullet 'slipped through'.

"Before, you guys said this right. That 'the analysis about you is finished'. Just what time are you talking about I wonder. By the time you failed to kill me for the second time, the scythe of death god has already lined up on the neck of you guys."

The gun spin moved at too high of rotation speed that it looked like a round shield. Hajime's figure that moved with sliding feet turning over and over while firing flashes in radial direction looked like he was dancing.

And then as long as that dance of death was continuing, one by one the apostles had their forehead pierced, their head exploded, and fell like a puppet with their string cut.

If they tried using their large sword as a shield, then an attack with three impacts compressed into it would assault and with just a single shot, a fatal damage would be inflicted on the large sword, in a hairbreadth the second shot would pierce the forehead altogether with the sword. Even when they tried long range attack or magic, their breathing at the instant they were going to attack was perfectly read, so they were only exposing their opening instead, but if they attempted close range combat then they would be intercepted by a bullet with bending trajectory.

When they attempted to overlap their twin large swords and silver wings as a shield to charge through, six shots would burst with pin point accuracy at the same time, the tremendous shockwave was generated while smashing the iron wall, or possibly the apostle would run out of strength and got blown away. And then, that impact would spontaneously make them relaxed the guard of their large sword and wing, the curving bullet would attack weaving through that opening.

"While I was thinking of the ways to kill you guys, what were you guys doing? Did you analyze my fighting style? Hah, that won't cut it at all. You got to train yourself, change your weapon, polish your tactic, heighten your proficiency, put double and triple layer of traps, and mass produce trump cards."

The apostles' worn-out remain vanished from the sky toward the ground like a cookie's crumbling that spilled from a mouth.

"Shut up-"

Right after that, along with an angry voice that sounded like it was desperately repressing something that welled up inside the speaker, a silver sun materialized. The sun that brilliantly shined was something made from focused magic power of apostle enchanted with disintegration ability. Looking closer, under the silver sun there were three apostles raising their large sword piled into one. Most likely this was a large bombardment executed by multiple apostles.

Looking at that, Hajime was…snorting in exasperation.

"Is that your trump card! Fine, bring it on."

"-…Vanish without any trace behind! Irregular!"

The three apostles swung down their sword in unison. The silver sun that was a compression of energy until the critical state radiated its light of ruin just like prominence. A super thick laser with diameter reaching ten meters approached Hajime in order to make everything of him into dust.

From 'Treasure Warehouse II', Hajime too out two pieces of disk——he took out two chakrams and threw them forward. One of the chakrams rotated in the air, when its flat part faced the approaching thick bombardment, at the next moment it divided into three parts.

The chakram was divided into three parts with equal distance between them, however, they didn't scatter into pieces, the parts were connected by thin wire, the parts spread widely in an instant and created large circle before Hajime's eyes.

At that moment, the silver huge laser reached Hajime…not, it was completely swallowed into the circle made by the divided chakram and the wire. And then, that swallowed silver light jumped out from the other chakram that also parted and created a similar large circle at a slightly separated place.

——Variable Chakram　Orestes

The chakram up to now could only create a gate at the small inside of the chakram, but this new type chakram 'Orestes' that had improvement applied in it could separate and with the built-in wire inside, a gate that could be freely changed in size would be made. Depending on the situation, it could also be used as a guillotine by making something passed halfway into the gate and then decreasing the size.

The apostles never even dreamed that the focused bombardment by three apostles which could be said as a trump card would be returned back to them as it was, perhaps they were unable to move while performing the firing, their reaction was dull and they got swallowed into the light that they fired themselves, they were annihilated literally without leaving even dust behind.

"You guys don't evolve. You cannot struggle to the death for the sake of living, for the sake of your wish, for the sake of what's 'important'. That's why, I told you right from the beginning didn't I? You all just wooden doll."

"Irregular! No, you are truly, a true monste——"

A gunshot echoed. The bullet that curved in trajectory approached easily like a joke and pierced the forehead of the last apostle.

While silver feathers and apostle remains were falling like an illusion, Hajime spun the smoking Donner & Schlag and finished reloading, then he silently stored them in their holsters.

Looking at the result, he was uninjured from a fight against the fifty apostles of god. Completely. It was truly overwhelming.

That fact made Shia, Tio, and Shizuku's expression to turn a bit into ecstasy. Suzu and Ryuutaro leaked out a dry laugh.

'Meteor Impact' that destroyed the God Mountain, sunlight convergence laser 'Burst Hyperion', gatling pile bunker and living bullet…when Hajime was given time, that many absurd weapons were produced one after another.

What did it mean by a non-combat job. What did it mean by mundane occupation. Indeed Hajime's body itself boasted monstrous spec due to an irregular event, but Hajime's true weapon was no other than that power of development. And then, in every age what became a threat to humanity was always 'something' that was newly created. In a sense, perhaps it could be said that Hajime was in possession of the most terrifying talent.

While it had been too late at this point of time, whether they wanted it or not Shizuku and the others were made to understand that.

"It's going to be troublesome if they come in succession. Let's go ahead right away."

Hearing Hajime who started running while giving out the order as though nothing happened, Shizuku and the others came back to their senses and chased behind him.

"Aaa. I wanted to show Hajime-san just now to Yue-san desuuu"

"Fufu, I thought that there might be this kind of thing. So I bring the image recording artifact. When everything is over, let art we hold a video appreciation meeting!"

"Tio-san, nice desu! As expected from the extraordinary pervert that might even leave her name in the history!"

"Fuhahaha, don't praise me, don't praise me! I would become shy thou know?"

Shia and Tio laughed with each other in composure while being inside the enemy base that was the Holy Precincts. Their feeling was loosening up with that while they dashed forward for a while.

Hajime and the others finally ran into a richly colored wall. When his hand touched the rippling wall, the hand easily sunk into the other side. They nodded at each other and the whole group leaped into the other side of the ripple.

If Nakamura Eri was asked what was her first memory that was the most intense, surely she would answer like this.

——The scene of Otou-san's death.

It was when Eri was five years old. She went with her father to a public park with just the two of them, there the high-spirited Eri jumped on the roadway carelessly and with a devilish timing a car came charging forward, then her father died protecting Eri. In a sense, it was the result of a mundane traffic accident.

But, there was one result that wasn't mundane. That was the state of her mother after that. Eri's mother was a daughter from a slightly high-class family, but it seemed that she went against her family and married with Eri's father, she was clinging all over the father to the degree that even Eri's childish heart got embarrassed.

That wasn't only because the mother merely loved the father, if someone took a step back and looked at it closer, perhaps it was on the level that could be said as dependence. For that reason, Eri's mother that from the start wasn't mentally strong was unable to endure the death of the beloved husband that supported her heart.

Because she was unable to endure, she bared her fang to the cause of death. Yes, her target was her own young daughter——Eri. Normally, a mother would swallow her tears while supporting her daughter who should be hurt because she witnessed with her own eyes the death of her father, that would be the correct way of living as a mother. But, as expected, although Eri's mother held back in front of other people, when they returned home and there were only the two of them, she would direct her hatred at Eri without sugarcoating it at all.

For Eri's mother, if her daughter and her husband were weighed on the scales, the scale would tilt to the latter, she loved her daughter was also only because Eri was her husband's daughter.

At the time, the five years old Eri earnestly endured the violence that was carried out almost every day and the abusive language spewed out to her. That was because Eri who was smart for five years old was completely accepting the words of her mother that said "because of your fault" to her. Her carelessness killed her father——the one who believed that more than anyone else was no other than Eri herself.

It was only natural for her mother to be angry at her who stole the father that her mother loved. It was only natural that she who made her father died was given punishment to both her heart and body. Eri believed that from the bottom of her heart.

At the same time, Eri also believed that when this punishment was over, than her mother who looked like a demon would return to the gentle mother in the past who always smiled kindly.

Her mother's abuse was ingenious, she had never done anything that might leave any mark on Eri's body. Eri too had also never revealed anything for the sake of her mother, and also for the sake of the punishment to her. Because of that, such situation continued for a few years, but there was no one that could notice what happened.

However, for a child there was no way she would be able to always be smiling in such environment. As a child clad in gloomy atmosphere Eri practically didn't have any friend at school. Her lone quiet self that looked like someone bracing herself waiting for the storm to pass was surely eerie for the children of the same age.

Isolation and self-condemnation and the pain of her heart, her feeling that was thinking of her mother, and loneliness…Eri's heart was nearing its limit from all those. Like that she endured such situation for several years, but in a sense it also could be said as astounding how she endured that long.

A change happened at such gloomy days.

Nine years old——when she was in third-year elementary school. Her mother brought home an unknown male into their home. He was an adult male with an arrogant attitude and bad character. Her mother was making sickly-sweet coaxing voice at that man while clinging coquettishly all over him.

Eri couldn't believe it. Didn't her mother throw that much anger and hatred to herself exactly because she loved the father from the bottom of her heart, Eri thought.

That thinking wasn't mistaken. But, the heart of Eri's mother was far weaker than even Eri thought. To the degree that if she wasn't supported by someone, then she wouldn't be able to live properly.

From that day, Eri's house was lived by that man.

The way the man acted in the house was exactly like a typical trash that often came out in a cheap novel. And then in addition, as though to follow the clichéd story of such novel, the gaze of that man toward Eri wasn't something that was usually directed to a little girl.

The disgusting feeling that felt like it was crawling all over her body caused Eri to pass her time inside the house holding her breath even more than before. Even so, the act and speech of the man were gradually escalating, before long Eri called herself with 'boku' (TN: This way of calling oneself was usually used by a boy, a girl usually used 'watashi') and she kept her hair in rough short-cut style. That was the meager measure of the small Eri to defend herself from the thinking that 'if he is not seeing me as a girl then'.

At school, Eri who even at normal time was already seen as gloomy and somewhat eerie, one day she suddenly changed the way she called herself and came with short hair like a boy, that caused the few children who even though they weren't her friend but they still conversed daily with Eri, even those children distanced themselves from Eri. Eri became isolated further and further.

Even so, even if she felt that her mother betrayed her father, Eri still believed. That her mother would surely return to the gentle mother in the past. She pretended to not notice that such thinking was only a type of escape that averted her eyes from reality.

That hope of Eri that was like grasping at straw, was destroyed by an event that made her realize that the hope was really just a fragile straw. Finally the man bared his fang of desire at Eri. It was while Eri's mother was going out for her night work.

Fortunately, though it was unclear if it could really be called fortunate, the neighbors who heard Eri's scream notified the police, thanks to that Eri's chastity wasn't scattered. Eri herself was thinking that perhaps this kind of day would come, so she had prepared every day by opening the window so her scream could easily reach, that was also the reason she was saved.

And so being attacked wasn't something shocking for Eri. Rather, she even thought that it was a chance. With this her mother should finally open her eyes. Her mother would cut the connection with a man that attacked her own daughter and she would remember Eri's father. In any case, the man was caught

by police, so their connection was severed. With this the livelihood of Eri and her mother would be improved slightly, she thought.

Yes, she thought like that.

Only until her mother directed a hatred that was even more than until now to her.

After finishing with the questioning from the police and she returned together with Eri back to their home, what came flying the very first to Eri was the mother's slap. And then, the mother said this to Eri. "How dare you seduce that person."

It seemed, for her mother, the incident where Eri was attacked by the man wasn't an impetus for her to realize the trashiness of the man, but it was perceived by the mother as Eri stealing her mother's man once more. Rather than about her daughter receiving assault, the matter of how the man was separated from her and how the man's desire was directed at Eri were the matters that the mother couldn't stomach.

A mother that betrayed her father, a mother that hurt her, a mother that was sad because the man was gone rather than about her daughter got assaulted…at this time, Eri finally realized. No, perhaps it should be said that she finally looked straight at something that she had actually understood but she averted her eyes from.

That was, that her mother didn't love her. That her mother of the past wouldn't return anymore. That the real nature of her mother wasn't the gentle figure in the past, but the figure overflowing with ugliness in front of her eyes right now.

She realized those.

That was why——Eri broke.

Everything that she believed was an illusion. Her enduring was meaningless. And then, there was no hope for the future ahead. Those factors were far than enough to break the very young Eri.

When she woke up the next day not from her sleep but rather from her fainting, it was early morning when the sun still hadn't even risen, there Eri slipped out from the home. This wasn't an act of testing affection that children tended to do, to see if her mother would worry and came to search for her. It was for the sake of ending herself——in other words, for suicide.

She got out of the home was because she didn't want to die near her mother for some reason.

Like that, Eri wandered unsteadily without any particular destination, and what she discovered was a river. A large river at a place slightly distanced from home. The well-maintained river plain became a good place for children to play. With this Eri who stared vacantly at the river flowing below from the iron bridge spanning above got a thought, let's do it here.

It was a river with quite the amount of water, but the flow wasn't particularly fast, and it wasn't like the water level rose due to rain. For suicide by drowning, this place could honestly be said as unsuited. Rather than drowning, there was more danger from jumping down from the bridge and landed wrongly. Although even that risk would be lessened by the river water and wouldn't cause death in many cases.

Eri's body somehow climbed up with her thin arms, her upper body jutted out a lot outside the handrail. Like that as though being sucked in, Eri's body was almost falling toward under the bridge…exactly at that time, suddenly a voice called at her.

——What are you doing? The voice said.

What entered into Eri's vacant eyes that looked back was a young boy around the same age of her, he was wearing a jersey and was obviously jogging. Eri also knew well about this boy, he was someone at the same school with her who gathered all the popularity into himself, a shining bright boy——yes, it was Amanogawa Kouki.

Seeing the dark expression of the looking back Eri, Kouki guessed that she wasn't in a normal state of mind, he pulled back Eri forcefully from the handrail and displayed his sense of justice in full.

To Kouki who persistently asked her situation, Eri explained with a lot of things omitted. She did that because if she didn't then it didn't seem like Kouki would let her go. Kouki who listened to the really shortened explanation of Eri then comprehended it like this.

Eri who was isolated in school was disciplined strictly by her father because of that. When she asked for help from her mother, even her mother than scolded her together with her father. Eri didn't have any ally and feeling sad, she tried to suicide.

That conclusion couldn't be said as mistaken from hearing only that fragmentary information. For Kouki who was still immature and fiercely under the impression that human nature was fundamentally good as his thinking foundation, thing like the principle behind the act of Eri's mother was beyond his understanding, he was unable to even imagine that an adult male would make a girl the same age as him into the man's outlet for desire, furthermore, the mother would instead blame her daughter for that. And so, the conclusion became like that within Kouki's sphere of understanding.

Understanding it like that, with a smile and strength that made the girls in school into his captive even in that age, Kouki put his hands on Eri's cheeks while declared from point-blank range.

——You are not alone anymore. I will protect Eri.

He said that. The word 'protect' was told to her, into the heart of a broken girl, right after she comprehended that she was worthless for everyone. It was said so surely without a doubt. From the most famous boy in the school that was like a prince, in a situation that could be said as dramatic in a sense, that kind of thing was said to Eri.

In the bottom of her heart, for the little girl who had been continuously searching for affection from someone all this time, that word was extremely intense.

Furthermore, at that day, Eri who somehow given up suicide was driven out by her mother to go to school, there at the school she was surprised because the girls in the class came to talk to her brightly one after another, furthermore when she knew that this situation was because of a word from Kaori…to say it frankly, her heart fell to him right there.

After that, the staffs of child consultation center suspected mistreatment from the behavior of Eri's mother and they visited to investigate several times. However, even though she was young, she knew that if she was separated from her mother here then at the same time she had to move to another

place, in other words, she would be separated from Kouki, Eri who sensed that then acted a ‘girl who loved her mother’ with all her might.

She felt like she was going to vomit, but in front of the staffs she embraced her mother with a full smile and acted the scene of a close mother and daughter. Even now Eri still remembered the expression of her mother at that time. Her expression that changed from shock into a cramped face, and then it vividly changed into definite fear.

Looking at her mother like that, what Eri thought was, “Aah, so it’s like that.” Just by changing the method, something like position or emotion could be overturned easily. Just by her smiling cheerfully as though her gloominess until now was just a lie, her mother immediately averted her eyes and shut up. When later she whispered “Next, what do you want me to steal?” jokingly, her mother went pale and she screamed while rushing out from the home.

Eri was convinced, that all of these were thanks to Kouki——the prince who suddenly appeared and swore to protect her. That in that day her prince saved and changed her. That she was reborn due to Kouki. That was why, her life from now on would be together with him who was like a radiant light and she would live similarly within the light.

She indirectly threatened her mother, and then she induced so her mother only delivered the living cost to the home, she arranged the environment so she could be at Kouki’s side…she was convinced that she was someone special that was chosen by the prince…

But, Eri was in a misunderstanding. For Kouki, Eri was nothing more than one person who should be saved by the hero of justice. After calling out to his classmates and asked them to be friendly to the isolated Eri, Kouki’s rescue was over with that. Similar with how in anime the people that were saved by the hero didn’t come out anymore at all in the next episode, for Kouki the matter of Eri was ‘a story that was already over’.

That was why Eri thought strangely of Kouki who only came in contact with her as though she was the same like ‘that other crowd’, why the other girls were unable to understand that she was Kouki’s ‘special one’ for some reason. ‘Because, that spot is the spot where I belong right?’ she wondered.

Due to that, Eri who was unable to approach Kouki in mind and body and could do nothing else except continuing to stare at Kouki began to notice various things.

The girls in the class who talked to her intimately did that only ‘because that was Kouki’s request’.

That at Kouki’s side, there was already ‘special one’ who accompanied him from even far earlier than the time when they exchanged words at the bridge in the early morning, that there was no place for her to belong or anything there.

That For Kouki, she was a someone whose story with him was already over.

The moment she realized that, it was as though she was going mad, no, she was literally going mad while thinking about the same thing continuously every day.

——You said that I’m not alone anymore right?

——You said that you will protect me right?

——I am special for you right?

——Heey, why, are you saying the same words to another person I wonder?

——Heey, why, are you not looking at just me I wonder?

——Heey, why, right now, you are not rescuing me even though I'm in this much pain I wonder?

——Heey, why, are you showing that kind of face to another woman I wonder?

——Heey, why, are the eyes you are looking me with is the same like with 'that other crowd' I wonder?

——Heey, heey, heey,

“Eri…thank you. I can become strong like this, how I can fight that guy too, everything is thanks to Eri. Eri is my…”

“My? My what I wondeeer?”

Eri whispered into Kouki’s ear and deliberately pressing him to speak out the obvious answer. Against that, Kouki’s cheeks reddened slightly yet his words were firm.

“You are my…’special one’. No matter what happened, ‘I won’t let you be alone’ from here on. ‘I will protect Eri’.”

“Fuh, fufu, kuh, fuufufu…”

“Eri? ——Nmu-“

Eri who leaked out a chuckle from being unable to endure it caused Kouki to look across his shoulder with a worried gaze at her. While showing an expression of ecstasy, Eri piled up her lips on Kouki’s lips. And then, their lips separated with a silver string stretched between them. While staring back at Kouki’s eyes that looked empty somehow, Eri murmured smilingly.

“Yes, it’s fine like this. Kouki-kun, we are going to be together forever aren’t weee”

Dry wind blew.

——in the world where there is nooo one other than the two of us

The last words whispered inside Eri’s heart didn’t enter Kouki’s heart. In exchange of that, from a slightly distance place there was a sound echoing. Kouki’s expression warped into an ugly look. His eyes contained flame of hatred.

It was the footsteps of the hated enemy, and his childhood friends.

Chapter 165 – At the Ruined City

“It looks like a city at the end of the century right from the movie…”

“Yeah really. I’ve seen this kind of scene at Bio –zard or something…”

Suzu and Ryuutaro whispered those kinds of things while making crunching sounds with their steps. They ran their gaze at the surrounding alertly, but bewilderment was running on their face.

“Wait, Ryuutaro. Stop that already. What are you going to do if zombie really comes out here.”

Shizuku replied with a repulsed face. And then, with her expression looked similarly bewildered, she ran her gaze at the surrounding. The scenery of a devastated city was spreading in the eyes of Shizuku and others.

When they came out from the rich colored space, they arrived at a modern city that looked nearly similar with earth with its maintained street and high-rise buildings crowding together. However, just like what Suzu and Ryuutaro said, it was as though several hundred, or maybe even several thousand years had passed, everywhere they looked there were only decaying ruins.

There were buildings that looked like they could crumble anytime, there were also buildings that were barely standing by leaning on the neighboring building. All the spot that seemed to have glass attached had been smashed thoroughly, with the remains scattered everywhere. On the ground, there was rough and hard material like asphalt blanketing the ground, but there were countless cracks and undulations and also caved-in spots.

From how the faintly remaining words on the signboard scattered everywhere on the building wall or ground weren't earth letter, and how they couldn't find any traffic light at all on the street, furthermore from how the material of the building wasn't reinforced concrete, they could barely grasped that this wasn't a city of earth.

"Perhaps, in the past this city was crushed and then it was brought here whole. Something like taking a memento of what he crushed seemed like something that shitty bastard would do. There is also the trace of construction technique using magic that is completely impossible for the current earth applied here, it's like someone that thoroughly built a complicated card tower before smashing it."

"…There art a limit even for having a bad taste."

"This is the worst…"

Even on earth, there was a lot of romance stories about ancient cities that didn't remain in literature, cities that were excelling in technology even more advanced than the modern time or the like. Even this world might be a country that developed using magic in place of science until near the level of the modern earth.

And then, what was built up by those people was unmistakably trampled down by that Ehito Rujue while laughing. The figure of Ehito Rujue laughing loudly floated in their mind, turning their face into fierce loathing.

Although the city was devastated that it looked tragic just from looking, the townscape that looked similar to the modern city of earth made Hajime and others be somewhat nostalgic, they also felt that they were shown what would happen if Ehito was let free in the earth, causing them to tense their mind even further.

Before long, by the time they passed who knows how many intersections following the compass, a clock tower that looked just like London's Big Ben entered their sight from between the gaps of buildings. It appeared that clock tower was the entrance to go to the next area.

Hajime stored the compass in his breast pocket while taking the path that was heading toward the clock tower through a huge intersection.

But, right after that, his eyes quietly narrowed and his foot that was about to step forward returned back. Looking at his dangerous gaze, even the members other than Shia guessed that there was enemy and readied themselves. Only Shia seemed to be the one who had determined the location of the enemy, her gaze fixed for a moment on a part of the surrounding buildings before moving to another location continuously. There seemed to be something ahead of her gaze.

"Hajime-san. We are surrounded, what are we going to do?"

Shia was tapping Vire Doryukken on her shoulder while asking.

Toward that, Hajime's answer was…

"Hm? Of course, if there is a prey that enters the cage, then pulverizing it all together with the cage is common sense right? Everyone, prepare to jump."

" " "Eh?" " "

In front of Shizuku, Suzu, and Ryuutaro who raised befuddled voice from being taken aback again, Hajime took out large type weapon from 'Treasure Warehouse II'. It had a huge cross shape, at one of its side there were three protruding objects that looked like a wing attached.

——New Rocket & Missile Launcher Agni Orkan

There were two of them. The figure of Hajime holding two three-meter crosses attached with wings in both arms had the impressiveness as though he was clad with a reinforced exoskeleton.

"Now then. First of all, it's troublesome so let's blow up all of these thoroughly."

Hajime who fixed himself in place with Agni-Orkan at both his sides was showing a demonic grin while pulling the triggers without hesitation. The inside of the surrounding buildings became noisy, but it was already too late.

pshuu pshuu pshuu With such sound the small metal plate on the surface of the wings slide, inside it, there were countless pencil missiles loaded up, those missiles flew out all at once.

Their number had already surpassed three hundred. The swarm of pencil missiles was trailing orange fire line while slipping smoothly through the door and window of the ruined buildings as though understanding that the enemies were there.

Furthermore, *bashuuuuu* with that kind of gentle sound, sixty large missiles were scattered from the six muzzles at the tip of the cross to the center of the ruined city, all within a few seconds, they scattered to all directions in order to trample their respective target.

Right after that, gruesome explosion sound and tremendous shockwave – flame explosion trampled the center of the ruined city.

gogogo Along with such roar, the group of ruined buildings who were only barely standing even in the best of times began to crumble all at once.

"Wai-, thi, this is bad. Everything, is falling toward here!"

"That's why, I told you to jump."

"Don't say that so calmly, you one man army!"

The silhouettes lurking in the ruined buildings who barely survived the fierce attack of the pencil missiles tried to jump out from the windows in order to escape the collapsing ruins even while they had lost some limbs. Hajime who courteously sent them back(blown them inside) with the additional bombing of Agni-Orkan that was completely merciless got a tsukkomi from Shizuku while she invoked the 'Air Force' in her boots and leaped to the air.

The fragments of crumbling buildings rained down from above like a heavy rain, Suzu and Ryuutaro also jumped away in panic amidst the sky that was rapidly getting cramped due to the group of the tilting buildings.

And then, they somehow avoided being swallowed by the crumbling buildings and landed on the rooftop of a derelict building in slight distance away.

"…You see, Suzu once saw the news on television. It was the image of an air raid in a conflict area. Suzu wonder if that feel like this."

"Fighting is something fruitless huh. …No one will ever imagine of blowing up the whole city huh. This is already unrelated with technique or experience huuh."

"Both of you, don't get far-away look like that…I understand your feelings too."

Dust rose up grandly. Looking at the ruined city that was instantly turned into a scene like a conflict area made Suzu and Ryuutaro have a far-away look. Shizuku patted their shoulder while thinking inside her heart "Just what is strength?". It was at that timing, *gacha* such sound that was like the symbol of ominous itself resounded.

Shizuku turned her face to that sound with creaking motion like a gear without oil, over there the figure of Hajime readying Agni-Orkan that he had finished reloading was…

" " "You are going to attack again!?" " "

"If you are going to do something then do it until not even a piece of meat remain. This is the culture of Japan that is even got placed on the Kojiki." (TN: Kojiki = Record of Ancient Matters (Japan's oldest historical record))

There is no such bloodthirsty culture! Suzu and others were going to make such tsukkomi, but the triggers were pulled faster than they could open their mouth. The swarm of large and small missiles danced on the sky once more. Rain of death was pouring down at the intersection where the wreckage of destroyed buildings was scattered.

"There is nothing to do isn't it?"

"Goshujin-sama too, he looked calm but it looks like his frustration hath piled up considerably. It can't be helped. How about we watch over him warmly until our turn comes up."

Amidst the flame explosion and the dust, Shia and Tio were sending gentle gaze at Hajime who was laughing loudly "HAA—HA-HA-HA" (TN: Imagine the laugh of Laharl from Disgaea) while continuously gifting lethal wounds at possibly hundreds of enemies lurking in the ruined city. Looking at those two, Shizuku who was plugging her ears with her fingers from the thunderous roar let out a sigh from the many difficulties in her future wondering if she really had to reach the level of the two.

"Why did I fall in love with this kind of person I wonder?" Just when she was thinking of something that was actually similar to what Shia once thought, suddenly Hajime turned back and aimed Agni-Orkan's muzzles at his allies.

And then, in front of the startled Shizuku and others, Hajime pulled the triggers with not even a speck of hesitation just as expected. Looking at the missile swarm that immediately flew out, Suzu went “Hii!” with a pathetic shriek.

But, naturally the missiles weren’t aiming at the allies, the missiles drew irregular trajectory while evading Suzu and others beautifully and flew behind them.

And then, flame explosions were scattered one after another at abandoned building around five hundred meters away from them. It was truly an air strike.

Just what in the world is he attacking there? Suzu and others were thinking that while trickling with cold sweat from the attacking method that was bad for their heart. Right after that, pure white light pierced the sky from that ruined building.

“That’s, don’t tell me-“

“Na, Nagumo-! Stop it! Didn’t you say that you gonna leave Kouki to us!”

Suzu and Ryuutaro turned back at Hajime while yelling. Yes, the pillar of light rising to the sky was undoubtedly Kouki’s magic power. Most likely Kouki released his magic power to defend against the sudden air strike. Hajime supposedly promised to leave Kouki and Eri to Shizuku and others, so the two of them directed flustered look at Hajime.

“That’s why I attacked them. Those two looked like they were going to run away after all. I made the explosion to surround them without any direct hit so it’s fine. In the end, it was just to hold them in place.”

Hajime declared “hold them in place” while looking at the scene of high-rise buildings collapsing like a joke at the surrounding. He only looked like a guy screwing around saying “I hit them with the back of my blade” while directing the sharp blade at the enemy.

However, in actuality Kouki’s magic power kept piercing the sky from inside the flame without any sign of weakening at all, so certainly Hajime didn’t hit them directly. Even when they understood that, as expected the cramping of Suzu and Ryuutaro’s expression didn’t stop.

“It appeared they were heading at that clock tower to escape. As expected, we can go to another space from there. I don’t know why they are in this kind of place but…well, you guys can talk with them to your heart’s content.”

“Ye, yep.”

“Ou…”

Suzu and Ryuutaro nodded, at the same time, Hajime leaped toward the clock tower in one breath. Following after he were Shia and others. Their movement that applied ‘Air Force’ and ‘Ground Shrinker’ made the distance of five hundred meters into zero instantly.

Kouki and Eri who had no place to escape surrounded by shockwave and flame from four directions also didn’t show any sign of moving from the rooftop of their ruined building, perhaps they had guessed they would be targeted with missile swarm once more if they tried to run.

Hajime and others landed on that ruined building.

“Aaaaa, we got discovered. Even though we expressly hid in one of Ehito’s space collection, why did you all came here of all placeee. Even though this place is the farthest place from the Divine Gate spatiallyy”

“Eri. Either way, I have to liberate everyone from Nagumo. If the other side comes by themselves to us, then this is actually a godsend instead, right?”

Kouki and Eri clung tightly to each other like a pair of lovers while exchanging a talk that strangely didn’t mesh with each other.

It appeared that from the bottom of her heart Eri didn’t want to get involved with Hajime and others, but it seemed that Kouki’s thinking that he had to rescue his comrades who he was convinced were brainwashed by Hajime didn’t vanish, so Kouki’s action was contradicting Eri who wanted to run away. Kouki’s eyes also looked cloudy, so they guessed that he had been brainwashed by ‘Bind Soul’ to the degree that he couldn’t feel the contradiction as a contradiction.

The gaze of Kouki who like always was equipped with a painfully bright holy sword and holy armor captured Hajime. Hatred, jealousy, rage——his gaze was muddy with such negative emotions boiling up.

And then, there was Eri who was rubbing her cheek on Kouki’s shoulder while letting out a coaxing voice that sounded sticky sweet, it was unclear whether it was subconsciously or consciously, but her attitude looked exactly like how her mother once was. Her outfit was clothes that had the chest and back part largely opened, the bottom also had deep slit inserted, the color of the clothes was pure white that matched Kouki. As though she was implicitly asserting that the one who was Kouki’s heroine was exactly her.

“Nagumo. You too are my classmate more or less. Originally you are someone that I have to save no matter what but…what you had done is too much. You killed your classmate, and you even brainwashed them…I, even if I have to dirty this hand, I will defeat you. And then, I swear I will save everyone from your filthy hand!”

“Yaaahnn. Kouki-kun, you are so cooool~”

Kouki sent a smile at Eri who was clinging to him with intoxicated expression before readying his holy sword.

“…Hajime. Please go. Leave this place to us.”

“Is it fine? Those guys had become something strange you know?”

Shizuku severely gripped her black katana so hard that it felt like creaking sound could be heard while she was urging Hajime to go ahead. Hajime was scrutinizing the two with the magic eye behind his eye patch while confirming at Shizuku. What he referred at wasn’t about Kouki’s behavior, he was pointing at the overflowing strength from Kouki that was incomparable with everything until now.

“I know that. But, it will be fine. Your artifact is together with me. Besides, you have the objective to rescue Yue correct? We are the one who should do something about this absolute moron somehow.”

“….Well, I guess.”

Hajime agreed with Shizuku with a shrug, he gave a glance at Kouki who was sending him intense gaze with eyes lifted up in wonder hearing the way Shizuku called Hajime's name and their talk that was filled with trust. And then Hajime urged Shia and Tio to go ahead with his gaze.

Kouki that guessed that Hajime and others were going to advance by ignoring him released killing intent so thick that was unthinkable coming from the Kouki before. His magic power also further roared and burst up.

"You want to escape-! You coward-! As I thought, I will defeat the filthy yo——"

The moment when he lifted his holy sword to let fly a slash, Kouki was blown away by an impact. Eri who was clinging to him was also forcefully separated from Kouki by an explosion of a really small barrier that was deployed near her unnoticed.

At the place where Kouki was standing before, there was the figure of Ryuutaro with his fist outstretched unmoving.

"Kuh, Ryuutaro. As I thought, you too are brainwashed by Nagumo…"

"What are you saying? Rather it's me who is trying to help you right now yeah? Doing something like sending killing intent at Nagumo…no way I can let my best friend get turned into minced meat like that."

"What are you saying…"

"So you ain't getting it huh, the you right now. You got really messed up at the head there. That's why I'm telling you, this awesome best friend is gonna beat you up black and blue until you wake UUUUP!"

Ryuutaro howled. Kouki's state that looked really tragic fanned up his rage. That violent rage was directed at his best friend who didn't want to look at reality, and at his powerless self who couldn't do anything until his friend was turned into something like this.

That violent rage was poured into the fist that was tightly clenched like a rock, Ryuutaro leaped toward Kouki.

"Aaaann, geez-. That's cruel to separate me from Kouki-kun. Is that something that a be-st-fri-end would do? Hey, Suzuu?"

"…Because Suzu feels that Suzu is your best friend, that right now, Suzu is here. Suzu won't let Nagumo-kun and others lay their hands on you, so it's fine to not be that scared you know, Eri?"

"…Hee, looks like you can talk big right now eeh"

Eri's expression quietly vanished due to Suzu's calm words and gaze. That was because Suzu's image as a naïve girl and a docile enemy of little importance in her mind was crumbling, Eri could feel a larger presence from her. And also because she who was fully wracking her brain inside her heart due to the unexpected encounter with Hajime was seen through by Suzu.

Suzu floated a smile on her lips from looking at Eri's change. She understood that she had finally become someone that Eri couldn't ignore.

"Nagumo-kun. Just as Shizushizu said, leave this place to Suzu and others, 'kay?"

Suzu said while drawing out the twin iron fans dangling on her waist and readied herself.

“…Don’t get half-assed. After all, it will be troublesome if I’ve got to kill her myself later.”

“Yep. Suzu gets it. Suzu will properly settle this, no matter what shape it ended in. Nagumo-kun and others too, be careful okay.”

Hajime shrugged, then he directed his gaze at Shizuku. Shizuku too, she smiled slightly and nodded.

“See you later.”

“Yeah. Later.”

A light parting. Be that as it may, those words were filled with the resolve to reunite again without fail. Gazes of trust certainly crossed each other there.

This time Hajime turned back for sure. Without looking back, he rushed to the clock tower accompanied by Shia and Tio. “Wait-“ Kouki’s yell could be heard toward that back, but Ryuutaro’s war cry that immediately resounded after that and the thunderous roar that his fist played erased that voice, making it immediately inaudible.

And then, Hajime, Shia, and Tio followed the guidance of the compass and vanished into the rippling dial of the clock tower toward another space.

“Araraa, he really went away. Even though it would be better if you weren’t obstinate and said ‘help meeee’ instead. Putting it bluntly, if that monster is not here then there is no problem at all you knooow?”

While laughing with a broad grin, Eri moved her gaze at Suzu and Shizuku who faced her.

“I wonder about that. Indeed, I am feeling an abnormal aura from the two of you right now. But, even we are by no means the same like before you know?”

“Ahahah, scary scary. I cannot let my guard down against Shizuku especially isn’t iiit. Then, how about I call my reassuriiing comrades tooo!”

Eri snapped her fingers. Right after that, *BOOM* with a thunderous roar the wreckages of the destroyed buildings at the surrounding exploded. From inside the bursting up dust and scattered debris, countless silhouettes leaped and surrounded Suzu and Shizuku.

“Puppet soldiers…weren’t they get crushed by Nagumo-kun…”

“Fufufuh, didn’t I told you. There is no problem if that monster is not here. You see these guys, their body is specially made, as expected a direct hit from missile is impossible to recover from, but they won’t break with something at the level of the building collapsing you knooow”

Furthermore,

“DOWAAAAAAAH!?”

Ryuutaro was sent flying toward Shizuku and Suzu while raising such loud scream.

“——’Light Halo’”

Suzu immediately swung her iron fan, deploying a net made from linked light rings and caught Ryuutaro.

“Ouch ouch. Suzu, you saved me there.”

“What happened, what about Kouki-kun?”

“No good yeah, that guy. He is not getting it at all, about his position, what the hell he is doing right now, everything. Even when I pointed out anything inconsistent, he just settled it as ‘brainwash’. It doesn’t look like that just one or two punch gonna be enough for him.”

Ryuutaro sighed and scratched his head while reporting. Shizuku moved her gaze toward the surrounding puppet soldiers and Kouki who just landed beside Eri while asking more question.

“What about his strength?”

“No doubt about it, he got something done to him. You see him putting on the light that looks like ‘Limit Break’ right? He practically became strong like when he used ‘Limit Break’, but it doesn’t look like he is getting tired at all.”

“Is that so…well, we already resolved from the beginning that there will be many difficulties anyway.”

Looking at the three people who confirmed the situation with a small voice, Kouki showed a sad expression and opened his mouth while being wrapped in light.

“Shizuku, Suzu, Ryuutaro. Won’t you three surrender? I don’t want to fight you guys. You are being brainwashed, and perhaps everything I say only sounds like nonsense for you, but I, want to save everyone. I will free you all from Nagumo’s curse!”

“Kouki-kun, how saaad. Beetrayed by your childhood friends, even so, you still try to save them heroicallyy”

“Eri…it’s fine. It doesn’t matter about me. As long as everyone is safe then that’s it. If I can just defeat the incarnation of evil that Nagumo…”

“It’s going to be fineee! After all Iii, only Iii, am Kouki-kun’s ally okaaay~”

“Thank you, Eri. Since the past, I only keep getting supported by you…”

Eri and Kouki gazed at each other. The emptiness in Kouki’s eyes increased while the rift of Eri’s warped smile deepened.

“See? That’s not a level where talking can go through right?”

“……Haa, indeed, looks like it. If that’s the case, to return that idiot to normal, we have to release him from Eri’s ‘Bind Soul’ and…”

“On top of that, there is also the need to beat up Kouki-kun until he is half-dead to teach him the reality isn’t it. …For the time being, Suzu will take care of Eri. After all, the destructive strength of Kouki-kun, with the support of Eri’s darkness magic is the worst combination.”

The three of them nodded to each other. Looking at such three, Kouki looked down sadly.

“As I thought it’s no good…got it. Then, first I’ll make the three of you powerless even if you will hate me for it later. And then I’ll defeat Nagumo and unravel the brainwash!”

Kouki’s mood heated up by himself and he readied his holy sword in overhead stance. Immediately, unusual magic power burst up from his body. A pressure that was even more powerful than ‘Supreme Break’ scorched the air.

“Chih, I don’t know what that is, but that looks bad-!”

Ryuutaro tried to charge once more in order to stop Kouki’s technique. But, at that instant, the surrounding puppet soldiers assaulted the three all at once.

“Ahahahahah, I won’t let that you knoow? Don’t forget the lovable heroine-chan who is supporting the hero okaaay!”

Eri was laughing loudly while a western sword that seemed to be artifact appeared unnoticed in her hand. She waved it like a conductor baton. The double-edged blade that had thin red lines on its surface was clad with gray magic power.

“You only look like an evil female leader you know, Eri. If you aren’t self-aware of that, then Suzu will lend you my mirror.”

Suzu replied like that while elegantly waving her twin iron fans. The fans opened and a gentle wind blew, along with that tender magic power light spread like a sunset.

“Call the sanctuary right here, ‘Holy Severance’.”

Right after that, a barrier of light enveloping the three deployed. There the attacks of the puppet soldiers that came one after another——every single one of them struck using sword artifact that was clad in magic power. *Gakin* Hard sound resounded, the barrier emitting holy light perfectly blocked the countless sword attack.

Furthermore,

“Swallow, ‘Holy Severance – Burst’.”

The instant the twin iron fans were closed with a snap, the barrier exploded with heinous destructive power. Fierce shockwave and the broken fragments of the barrier blown away the grouped up puppet soldiers altogether.

“Nice job, Suzu!”

Ryuutaro leaped forward. His sharp eye glint pierced straight at Kouki.

“Don’t let your guard down! ‘Holy Severance – World’.”

Suzu supported by lining up many layers of barrier possessing the radiance of Holy Severance to make triangle tunnel that matched with Ryuutaro’s path. It had been proven that Suzu’s Holy Severance couldn’t be broken by the attack power of the puppet soldiers.

Ryuutaro rushed fiercely inside the tunnel. The unknown technique that Kouki was going to invoke was so powerful that the air was rumbling. But, if he had Suzu's protection, he could shut Kouki down before the invocation. Ryuutaro was convinced of that.

But,

"You underestimate me too muuch"

At the same time, one puppet soldier jumped high forward at the same time when they heard that voice tone which rubbed anyone's nerve the wrong way. That puppet soldier aimed his large sword at the barrier tunnel and swung down in one breath.

PAAAAAAN!!

"Wwha-!?"

The sound of destruction reverberated. Of all things, the moment an attack of that puppet soldier hit Suzu's barrier directly, reddish black ripple spread and a violent impact scattered, just like that the barrier was pulverized like a paper scrap.

Ryuutaro raised a shocked voice while twisting his body to barely evade the large sword that was swung down on his path, then in a perfect timing another sword attack approached from another puppet soldier.

A horizontal sweeping attack. In addition, a pincer attack that aimed at his neck and his flank. Ryuutaro tried to repel away the attacks even while his posture was unstable by using the gauntlets of both his hands.

But, these two puppet soldiers weren't normal. The swung sword flickered like an illusion, the real sword traced a trajectory that was different from the trajectory that Ryuutaro focused on and approached him.

"__"

While screaming wordlessly, Ryuutaro who realized that the defense of his gauntlets wouldn't make it in time, within an instant, he used partial strengthening of Vajra to strengthen only the locations that the sword would hit.

Gakin A sound of metals clashing with each other sounded, the two attacks of the puppet soldiers were blocked by Ryuutaro's Vajra. But, the third puppet soldiers that appeared unnoticed at the front mercilessly thrust his bright red large spear that was flaming hot toward Ryuutaro's heart.

Ryuutaro immediately crossed both his arms and resolved to receive the attack. Fierce impact assaulted Ryuutaro, but his trusted partner, the gauntlets were somehow not pierced, it was enduring the attack of the spear. If the gauntlets hadn't gone through Hajime's demonic remodeling, perhaps even both his arms would also get pierced through.

But, the true worth of the burning large spear wasn't just to burn the opponent that it touched. In the next moment, it looked undulating, and then instantly a large explosion occurred along with a thunderous boom.

“-aAAAAAA-!?”

Ryuutaro who raised his scream this time was forcefully made to go back through the tunnel, he fell on the ground using ukemi technique and tried to stand right back up immediately. (TN: Ukemi, judo technique that is a way to fall safely.)

At that moment, two more puppet soldiers thrust their bastard sword. Not toward Ryuutaro, but toward a ground slightly away from him.

Right after that, *bikibikibiki* such sound came out, the place that the swords stabbed instantly froze completely. That freezing instantly stretched toward underneath Ryuutaro like a crawling snake, it attacked with perfect timing at the instant where Ryuutaro was kneeling from his ukemi.

Due to that, the ground under Ryuutaro’s legs was frozen and he got restrained, and then four puppets jumped for the final blow. Every single one held a large sword, the swords were similarly flaming red hot like the previous large spear user, if Ryuutaro kept getting showered with attacks like this, then at this rate he wouldn’t come out unscathed no matter how sturdy he was.

Behind Ryuutaro who was cornered into a desperate situation, there was Shizuku who was losing ground against the puppet soldiers who was attacking her until now using impossibly unique abilities. Shizuku saw Ryuutaro’s distress and tried to go to his help, but due to a puppet soldier that created an improvised binding tool by manipulating the floor of the rooftop, Shizuku was held back in place.

Not only that, similar with Ryuutaro, four puppet soldiers also leaped toward Shizuku whose feet was restrained. Two puppets held spear clad in lightning while the other two brandished sword clad in gray sands. It was obvious that it wouldn’t end well for her no matter which one she got hit with.

Shizuku showed unease from the unexpected strength of the puppet soldiers while she was about to use her new card.

“First is the most troublesome Shizuku, yes you. ——’Wicked Wrap’.”

“Uh, a?”

However, she was hindered by Eri. Black flickering globe suddenly appeared before Shizuku’s eyes, the moment it entered her sight Shizuku’s body became unable to move at all.

Darkness magic ‘Wicked Wrap’——a magic that obstructed the command from the brain to be sent to the body.

With this Shizuku failed to show her card and she exposed a fatal opening. Eri smugly made a sticky grin.

By using ‘Bind Soul’, Kouki was made to think that even if the three were injured lethally they could be revived later on. And so Kouki who was thinking about ‘saving Shizuku and others’ didn’t feel that hurting the three was evil, and he wielded his strength without any hesitation. There was no need to hold back because later they could be restored back to live.

Of course, there was no way such thing could happen, in the first place Eri wouldn’t let such thing happen. She would at least added the three into her puppet soldiers using ‘Bind Soul’, but she had no plan to properly let them stay alive.

Therefore, she chuckled when she was about to kill the first victim but,

“Dance down, ‘Holy Severance – Sakura’.”

At that instant, countless shining fragments rushed through the battlefield just like a sakura storm. Small countless radiances danced in the air with rustling sound *zaaaaaa——*. They spiraled with Shizuku and Ryuutaro at the center while raising up a whirlwind.

And then the attack of the puppet soldiers was blocked softly by the condensed gathered fragments, dispersing all the impact. Not just that, the flower storm of light swooped down on the puppet soldiers who after attacking were showing lethal opening, like a muddy stream swallowing small fish.

After the flower storm of light passed through, there were the tragic appearances of the puppet soldiers there. Their whole body was mangled, their limbs couldn’t maintain their original form. And the most striking thing was how their head had become in pieces as though the head was exploded.

‘Holy Severance – Sakura’——this magic was literally making the powerful barrier that was Holy Severance into small fragments like sakura petal, if anything was touched by it then they would be cut, and when an attack came they would become flexible wall like a willow bamboo, it was a barrier that unified offense and defense into one.

When Suzu waved her twin iron fans like a traditional Japanese dancer, the sakura flowers of light moved like a stream matching with her movement.

“Fuu. Thanks for the save, Suzu.”

“Ou, thanks. Rather, what the hell with these puppet soldiers.”

“You are welcome. …Those looks like the characteristic magic that monster has aren’t they? Suzu cannot see anything like chanting or magic circle.”

Shizuku and Ryuutaro pulled themselves together using the time that Suzu bought and they gathered beside Suzu. Their eyes narrowed gravely, vigilantly looking around at the puppet soldiers surrounding them.

But, at that time, Kouki’s technique was finally completed, the pure white magic power that pierced the sky began to converge on Kouki’s back like a video that was rewound. That abnormal magic power was gradually forming a shape with swaying motion.

“…This is your last chance. Although you all can be revived back to life later on, if possible I don’t want to hurt you three.”

Kouki sent calm voice at Shizuku and others.

Before long, the mass of magic power that Kouki emitted spread out like wings, and then thick and tough tail stretched out, a long neck and head rose, sharp fangs were formed and clanged with each other, brutal claws carved the floor of the building.

Kouki continued his words at Shizuku and others who were looking on in wonder.

“’Heaven Might – Infinite Change’——this is a technique that makes it possible for Heaven Might that could only be activated as bombardment before to be continuously controlled in its activated state. This dragon, just by existing it carries the destructive power equal of the Heaven Might in full power. In addition, as long as we are in [Holy Precincts], I won’t run out of magic power, so trying to buy time is pointless. …You understand right? The current me is stronger than even Nagumo. All of you absolutely cannot win against me. That’s why…surrender.”

The light dragon that was formed from Heaven Might itself roared. At the same time, a bombardment was fired from its mouth, obliterating a high-rise building one kilometer from their spot in one attack. Indeed, on top of the ‘Heaven Might’ being released in full power without time limit, Kouki’s power didn’t seem to weaken at all, so it appeared that he was supplied with inexhaustible magic power.

“By the waaay, you see, all the puppet-chan at the surrounding, they have magic stone inserted in them, they are a hybrid of monster and human you knooow? With their teamwork and skill unchanged when they were still alive, they now also have the characteristic magic and spec equal to monsteeer. That’s riiight, for the time being, I gueeess you can call them ‘corpse beast soldier’.” (TN: That’s too long, in Japanese their name is just ‘shijuuhei’, but in English it got that long.)

Eri said that. She was implicitly conveying that there was an overwhelming difference in battle strength between them while smiling repulsively. She unfolded her gray wings on her back with a loud flap. With that she conveyed that she herself possessed a strength that resembled an apostle, inviting the three to despair.

Furthermore at the surrounding, it seemed there was corpse beast soldier that could use characteristic magic of healing, even corpse beast soldiers that were carved and blown up by Suzu just now stood back up with their wound healed, other than that there were also reinforcement corpse beast soldiers who seemed to be made to standby for just in case, they were gathering one after another.

Even after excluding the several hundred puppet beast soldiers that were exploded by Agni-Orkan at the beginning, there appeared to be nearly a hundred and fifty battle strength still remaining.

There was Kouki who controlled Heaven Might that carried immense destructive power with complete mastery, furthermore he had no time restriction, his own body was also able to constantly maintained ‘Supreme Break’ state. And then, there was Eri who was likely to possess a spec that nearly approached an apostle and also mastery of darkness magic, added by her ability that could thoroughly control a group of a hundred and fifty corpse beast soldiers.

Indeed, this situation could be said as hellish. If it was the normal classmates who were here then perhaps they would fall on their knees in despair.

But, the ones who were here were the people who had challenged great labyrinths, who had their weakness thrust before them and made to know their powerlessness. These people had faced themselves and swallowed down their dirty and embarrassing part, taking a step forward.

And then, these people had seen that young man, the one who no matter what kind situation he was in, no matter who he faced, he still wouldn’t take even a step back.

That was why,

“Stronger than even Hajime? That’s just too excessive even for a misunderstanding. That man, he is truly ‘the world’s strongest’ you know?”

“Yeah, exactly. Besides, aren’t you two looking down on Suzu and others too much? Something like this won’t even count as ‘strength’.”

“Infinite change, corpse beast soldier, whatever…hah, all these just ain’t enough at all.”

Only something in this level at best wouldn’t even count as a difficult situation.

Kouki’s eyebrow twitched in reaction. Eri’s expression changed from scorn into something cold.

In contrast, Shizuku took the stance of her sword draw art, Suzu looked like she was dancing with her twin iron fans, and Ryuutaro took a karate stance. In their eyes, there was not even a speck of nervousness or despair. There was only calm resolve there, to do what they should do.

“Somehow, it’s really irritatiiing.”

“So the brainwashing influence is this deep…it can’t be helped. I will wake up all of you.”

With those words as the signal, the gong of the second round rang.

Chapter 166 – The Reached Out Hand Didn’t Reach

“I won’t hold back. It will be fine, after this I will revive you all without fail after all.”

Kouki thrust his holy sword together with those words. At that moment, the dragon of light that was made right from the highest grade light element attack magic ‘Heaven Might’ itself——the light dragon fired breath attack of Heaven Might.

The pure white light that scorched the air drew a spiral trajectory while approaching Shizuku and others.

Looking at that, Suzu was about to wave her iron fans to invoke Holy Severance for scattering the energy.

But, as though foreseeing that, Eri invoked her magic a step faster.

“Ahah, ‘Mind Sliip’!”

“——”

Darkness magic ‘Mind Slip’——a magic that temporarily sealed the target’s memory of a few seconds before until the current time. It was only a memory that felt like a blink of eye, but even so, if that magic was used in the middle of a battle it was an extremely troublesome spell that created a fatal opening. It was supposedly difficult to handle this magic because it was a high-class magic, but Eri could use it without difficulty.

“Chih”

In front of the approaching light of death with Suzu failed to lay out a barrier, Ryuutaro lightly threw away Suzu while he jumped away from that place together with Shizuku.

Right after that, the roar of Heaven Might passed through the spot where the three were just at the moment before, it pierced through a ruined building and fiercely shaken the whole building.

The corpse beast soldiers leaped from all direction in careful aim toward Shizuku and others who escaped to the air.

“Shred, ——’Fang Flash’!”

Shizuku invoked ‘Fang Flash’ while drawing out her black katana toward the corpse beast soldiers who swung their large sword from left and right. This attack would carve three lines simultaneously with one slash, however, although the arms of the corpse beast soldiers were cut off, the attack didn’t reach until their torso.

Shizuku narrowed her eyes looking at the result of the attack that she let out with the purpose of bisecting the enemy into two. The reddish black magic power enveloping the corpse beast soldiers was reflected in her eyes.

“’Vajra’ is it.”

As though to say that they didn’t feel any pain, even while they lost one arm the corpse beast soldiers switched to their other arm and swung their sword, Shizuku was whispering to herself while kicking on the air using ‘Air Force’ and rotated her body to evade.

Nearby her, there were the figures of Ryuutaro who blocked the approaching countless wind blades with his ‘Vajra’ and Suzu who parried red a spear using petals of light.

It appeared that the corpse beast soldiers had full array line up. Other than people who could use elemental offensive characteristic magic, there were also other people with defensive skill and healing skill. The group was really abundant with variation. In this aspect, perhaps there were also corpse beast soldiers that could hide themselves or absorb magic like the chimeras they faced before.

When Shizuku was being vigilant against the ability of the soldiers, suddenly a chill ran through her whole body. The warning bell of her instinct was ringing loudly. Shizuku immediately invoked ‘Air Force’ in conjunction with ‘No Beat’ and leaped away from that spot using her full strength.

At that moment, countless light blades passed through the space that Shizuku just vacated. The light blades kept soaring without stopping and cut into pieces the side of a ruined building at slightly far away place, the ruined building that lost its support collapsed with a thunderous sound.

Furthermore, Shizuku obeyed her ringing alarm bell that still wasn’t stopping and twisted her body, without even checking she turned behind and drew out her sword. The black katana that was accelerated with the unsheathing motion returned resistance and hard sound *GAKIN!*.

There, the figure of Kouki who blocked the black katana with his holy sword was standing.

“As expected from Shizuku. You’re strong.”

“You are the one who became weak. It’s a disgrace for Yaegashi-style’s name.”

“…How pitiful. So you are also made to be unable to understand even the difference in strength between us. But, that’s fine. Because I’ll protect Shizuku-!”

Perhaps thanks to the light dragon on his back, Kouki was able to normally fly in the air. He was smiling to Shizuku while locking sword with her in the air. But, the reply that came back to him were sharp words that made him murmured misdirected words and his expression distorted.

At the same time, the light dragon that glared at Shizuku from behind Kouki opened its jaw widely. And then, Heaven Might was fired from point-blank range at Shizuku with no lag time.

"-, 'Scorch Wave'! 'Draw Sky'!"

Shizuku swung her sheath at Kouki. Using the generated shockwave she forcefully separated their distance and Shizuku escaped from the firing line. But, she was unable to completely escape from the breath attack of Heaven Might that looked like an extremely a laser.

And so, using the black katana's ability the 'Draw Sky' that she invoked almost simultaneously, she attracted the breath of Heaven Might to her blade. And then, the moment the breath touched the blade, she used the twisting of her wrist and body and parried the pressure and shockwave toward behind her.

A sword art of Yeagashi-style——'Wood Chip Dance'. A parrying technique that made use of the blade to slide the opponent's attack. This time the technique was used in conjunction with 'Draw Sky' that was an ability to attract the target to the blade. She attempted this technique without any prior preparation, but she succeeded splendidly.

In her back, the sound of one more building collapsing due to Heaven Might was audible. Shizuku sent an exasperated gaze at Kouki while hearing that sound.

"Protect, is it. You had said that to me a few times in the past, but honestly, there is not even one time that I can remember where you protected me. Even now, you are saying you will protect me while releasing outrageous attack at me aren't you?"

"Is that so…that bastard Nagumo, he even falsified your memory. I guess you don't remember, but I was always at Shizuku's side, protecting you. Well, even if I said that I think it's pointless no matter what I said to the current Shizuku though."

"That's completely my line. I wonder, would I feel a little better if I put even just one large wound on that handsome face."

Blood vein was pulsing on Shizuku's forehead in irritation. Corpse beast soldiers were circling behind Shizuku. Looking closer, all of the soldiers had reddish black wings growing from their back. With that, they wouldn't have a problem even in mid-air battle.

Furthermore, when Kouki swung his holy sword, the light dragon on his back fired countless branching lights that formed small light dragons. The number was roughly thirty dragons.

"Shizuku, I will end the battle with this. As expected, you won't be able to endure simultaneous attack in this number right? It will hurt, but I will nurse you properly after this. Just sleep in peace."

After saying that one-sidedly, Kouki turned the tip of the holy sword at Shizuku. Immediately after, thirty small light dragons and corpse beast soldiers assaulted Shizuku from all directions. There was no place

to escape. Ryuutaro couldn't approach because of the light dragon's breath attack and the corpse beast soldiers.

Suzu immediately tried to act, but Shizuku herself stopped that using 'telepathy'.

{Shizuku-}

{It's fine, Suzu. I'll show you I can manage somehow against just this much!}

Right after those words reached Suzu through telepathy, Shizuku was swallowed by human silhouettes and light.

Kouki shook his head sadly looking at that. And then, as though to say 'If it's to save everyone, then I won't balk from dirtying this hand or getting hated!', with a resolute expression as though putting on airs like a tragic hero, he moved his gaze at Ryuutaro who he designated as his next target.

At that moment,

"My bad, but I flatly refuse for my sleeping face to be seen by any man other than him. ——'Flash Blossom'."

"-gua!?"

A straight horizontal line cut was opened on Kouki's chest and blood spray danced in the air. Thanks to the impregnable holy armor it wasn't a fatal wound, but even so it was quite a damage.

Kouki gazed in wonderment at how Shizuku was speaking calmly and how he got cut even with the distance. He was moving back with his hand pressing on his chest. And then, he discovered that.

"The, the katana, is flying?"

Kouki whispered by reflex.

Exactly as he said, in front of Kouki, Shizuku's black katana and a jet black katana that looked exactly the same were floating in the air with their tips pointing at Kouki.

Then, was Shizuku giving lethal wound at the corpse beast soldiers and small light dragons unarmed…Kouki moved his gaze gravely at Shizuku who was crowded by soldiers and dragons that they looked like an enclosed sphere shape.

Then, *slid* the soldiers and dragons that surrounded Shizuku had their bodies slipping off diagonally and fell down. Such astonishing scene entered Kouki's eyes.

And then, what appeared from between the gap of the enemies that fell down or dispersed in tatter…

Was the figure of Shizuku who blocked all the attacks with a barrier of countless black katana deployed around her.

"Sever off, ——'Omni Blade – Flash Blossom'!"

Shizuku raised her voice once more.

In an instant, the barrier of black katana shined in dark blue color, then this time all the soldiers and small dragons were bisected for sure. The soldiers fell to the ground, and the small light dragons dispersed. Amidst those, Shizuku headed straight to Kouki with black katana in hand.

Then, the naked black katana at the surrounding all pointed their tip down and lined orderly with Shizuku as the center. The number in total was twenty katana.

That figure standing in the air with straight back and dignity, a swarm of jet black katana following her, looked just like a hero in an illustrated story. The beautiful black hair in ponytail fluttered, the calm eyes carrying tenacious will pierced through Kouki.

Beautiful…Kouki whispered so in his heart without realizing. It was out of place, yet Shizuku's figure that was like a war maiden caused his heart to be stolen helplessly and he gulped.

"——'Living Swords(Swarm of Katana that Exemplify the Will)'. My soul is poured into all of these black katana. I wonder, can Kouki who continue to escape into convenient dream endure this?"

"Shi, Shizuku…"

Despite the calm voice, Kouki fell into a hallucination where he was struck physically, his voice got unconsciously caught in his throat. The current Shizuku was filled with a pressure that couldn't be pushed down using the difference in magic power and body spec.

"…Toward my Kouki-kun….what cheekiness. As expected, I just can't stomach Shizukuuu!"

Eri's expression distorted into ugliness and she was about to fire a magic at Shizuku. It seemed that she sensitively sensed how Kouki was fascinated by Shizuku. It was unforgivable for her that Kouki was attracted to anybody except her now when he was under her brainwashing. Her hatred and jealousy exploded, she was about to direct a magic to disturb Shizuku's mind and sent all her soldiers at Shizuku.

But, at the eyes of such Eri, countless fluttering shadows were reflected as though to hinder her.

Eri's gaze ran at the surrounding dubiously. And then she gazed in wonderment.

"Wha, what? This is, butterfly?"

Her murmured words hit bull's eye. Before she noticed, a swarm of a lot of butterflies was fluttering about the battlefield.

The source of this scenery was Suzu who unfolded her twin iron fans. Butterfly monsters were summoned continuously from the jewel that was attached to the handle of the iron fan. The spectacle of black crest butterflies with a red pattern on their jet black wings flying in spiraling orbit with the light petals deployed at the surrounding while rising to the sky were showing a mix of charm and mystique that usually didn't exist in Suzu, giving off a beauty that couldn't be put in words.

"Suzu had endured your first attack you know, Eri? This time it is Suzu's turn. Suzu won't let you ignore her anymore."

"Ahaha, what is the like of Suzu is saying——"

Amidst the battlefield that brimmed over with light petals and black crest butterfly, Suzu yelled at a different summoning artifact dangling on her waist——at one of the magic orbs.

“Inaba-san! Please!”

“Kyukyuu!”

At that moment, a white and crimson rabbit leaped before Suzu’s eyes, its figure vanished leaving behind afterimage, and instantly, the rabbit’s figure appeared behind Eri.

Eri was unable to react at that extreme speed. She was only able to barely catch that figure using her physical spec that was reinforced using the technique to create apostle.

Therefore, right after her eyes opened wide,

“aGUH!?”

Eri received the strong leg of the kicking rabbit ‘Inaba’ and crashed into a ruined building with a tailspin. Without stopping she pierced through that the building and got blown away for few hundred meters more. Just before she got hit by the attack, she enveloped her body with magic power equal to that of an apostle and performed reinforcement, so her life wasn’t ended with the attack just now.

“Eri-! Shit-, Suzu, what are you doing to your best friend-!”

“That’s why I told you, don’t keep sleep talking like that on and on!”

Kouki saw Eri was blown away and raised his voice. And then, when he was going to blame Suzu, an impact right from the side blocked his voice.

Kouki blocked Ryuutaro’s fist using his holy sword while creaking sound resounded *creak creak*. The two of them glared at each other from point-blank range in a posture similar to sword locking contest.

Kouki averted his gaze from Ryuutaro and glanced at the direction where Eri was blown away, at the same time the light dragon unleashed its claw and tail at Ryuutaro.

Ryuutaro paid attention to the claw and tail of the light dragon while he took no evading action. In exchange, he invoked the age of god magic that he obtained.

“Come, steel demo-n! ‘Sixth Heaven’s Demon Transformation!” (TN: Tenma Tenpen)

Right after, Ryuutaro’s body was tinged with light green magic power and transformed. *beki-beki* With such sound the muscles of his whole body enlarged and tore apart his tunic. His tall body that was originally a hundred and ninety centimeters easily surpassed two meters now, the corner of his eyes lifted up sharply and his canine lengthened and became exposed.

The radical change of Ryuutaro made Kouki gazed in wonderment, during that time the swung tail of light dragon attacked Ryuutaro’s back while the claw attacked his shoulder.

But, the attack of the light dragon that hit directly didn’t make Ryuutaro got wet with blood, *gakin!* a hard sound that was impossible for living flesh body resounded and the attacks were blocked.

“Wha-, Ryuutaro, that’s-“

“Kuuu! I felt that, oi! But, I endured it yeah? This time it’s my turn! ‘Scorch Wave’!!”

“＿＿”

As expected, it seemed that it was impossible to be undamaged after directly receiving the attack of the light dragon that was the avatar of Heaven Might, even so Ryuutaro didn’t get any serious wound, Ryuutaro who was grinning fearlessly with literally demonic look unleashed enormous shockwave from his gauntleted fist that was locked with the holy sword.

That attack didn’t consist only from the magic power that was converted into impact, but the addition of the pure physical strength that was drawn out from the muscled arm that had enlarged two sizes bigger like ogre’s arm became a tremendous strength that blown away Kouki.

Flying away with his voice caught up in his throat, Kouki crashed into a ruined building at the other side similar like Eri just now.

The corpse beast soldiers aimed at Ryuutaro who stayed unmoving with his fist thrust forward, but they were scattered by the many black katana soaring at high speed. Shizuku arrived beside Ryuutaro who transformed into an ogre and she opened her mouth after gazing briefly at him.

“Looks like you can use it well aren’t you. That’s wants pressure.”

“Hehe-, well, it’s also thanks to Nagumo’s cheatmate though. If it’s just by myself, I’m not gonna be able to easily use it this far.”

Ryuutaro glared at the ruined building Kouki crashed into without letting his guard down while acting humble in contrast with his appearance.

Metamorphosis magic ‘Sixth Heaven’s Demon Transformation’——using magic stone as a medium to change one’s a body, the characteristic of the monster whose magic stone was used would A great into the body, it was a little unique magic for a metamorphosis magic.

Ryuutaro had the aptitude for the metamorphosis magic itself, but he was unskillful in the usage of the magic (because he waswantsa muscle-brain, he did nothing but punching and kicking), he was unable to subdue the monster in the abyss in such short time.

There, Ryuutaro who thought of various things obtained a hint from Tio’s ‘dragonification’, and arrived at a conclusion typical of a muscle-brain.

Namely, ‘if I cannot subdue the monster, then isn’t it fine if I just become the same like the monster that I want to subdue?’, a that. Ryuutaro who was also familiar with his a body because he had done karate since he was little tested that idea of his without delay.

And the result, the metamorphosis magic Sixth Heaven’s Demon Transformation actually had a good compatibility with Ryuutaro, this magic could be classified as a super advanced magic even among the metamorphosis magic but he succeeded in it with relative ease.

Of course, there was no time for him to train so the time he could transform was really short, his result was also erratic so that when he released the transformation he got a severe feedback and it became a trump card of trump card that could only be used as last resort, but there Hajime resolved the problem.

That was, cheatmate——minerals that didn't have an adverse effect to human body like calcium and the like were enchanted with metamorphosis magic and sublimation magic, it was then turned into powder and then transmuted and became a solid food with a particular effect. With this food the body was temporarily transformed into an optimum condition in metamorphosis, next, strengthening effect that was nearly like 'Limit Break' was also applied on the eater so that they could endure even heavy burden.

This cheatmate once taken would maintain its effect for half a day, on top of that there was also no side effect after use. It was a top product of Hajime, all the members who stormed into Holy Precincts had already taken it. Shizuku was able to use twenty katana at the same time which was impossible without increasing her brain throughput was also thanks to this one-time use food artifact.

By the way, the naming was from Calo—Mate (TN: Calory Mate). If you believed the story that the meaning of 'mate' was 'friend' then…it was quite a horrible naming.

Shizuku and Ryuutaro were making frivolous talk while running their gaze through the corpse beast soldiers at the surrounding, then suddenly a 'telepathy' reached them.

{Shizuku, Ryuutaro-kun. Let's divide the two like this. Leave Eri to Suzu. Both of youa large amountplease take care of Kouki-kun.}

{Suzu…you are going to be fine right?}

{Yep. Suzu will say what she wants to say, ask what she want to ask, and then, punch that idiot flying.}

{Heh, that's great. …Don't you die yeah.}

{You too, 'kay.}

Far away, Suzu who put Inaba on her head gave a thumb up to them. And then, she turned on her heel and chased after the crashing Eri while handling the attack of the corpse beast soldiers at the same time.

Right after that,

DOGOOOOOOOON-!!

A thunderous sound resounded and the ruined building before Shizuku and Ryuutaro's eyes collapsed——no, the building was blown up from the inside. There shining brilliantly like a star, the figure of Kouki followed by a light dragon and countless small light dragons appeared.

Kouki was silent and expressionless. Like that without any sound he directed the tip of his holy sword at Shizuku and Ryuutaro.

"Ryuutaro!"

"Ou-!"

As expected, the two of them were war comrades who had fought together until this far. Dancing to the same beat they entered the stance for a pincer attack as thought they had arranged it beforehand. After that, the howl of Heaven Might passed through.

Even the after effect struck the body with immense impact, amidst that Shizuku and Ryuutaro paid attention to the light dragons that were flying near them and the surrounding corpse beast soldiers while moving toward their absolute moron childhood friend.

Part 2

Suzu advanced between the intervals of the ruined buildings, followed by light petals and black crest butterflies, and also Inaba.

Inaba who possessed sensitive rabbit ears taught her that the presence of Eri who was blown away was already gone from where she crashed.

Suzu thought for a moment whether Eri had headed to back up Kouki, but her instinct whispered to her somehow that Eri wouldn't leave her alone and she would head toward her.

And so, she moved through the area that was surrounded by the ruined buildings of the ruined city while being on guard but…the corpse beast soldiers had also vanished from the area without her noticing, in the area that was enveloped in eerie silence except of the battle sound of Shizuku and others from far away, Suzu was trickling sweat from unknown nervousness.

"Kyuu, kyu"

"Inaba-san…thank you. I'm just a little too nervous."

Inaba said "Suzu-han, you are too nervous ya. I'm here so you can puff up your chest without worry, you are betting on the winner here." and used his front leg to pat Suzu's forehead. Suzu's cheeks slightly loosened up and her shoulders relaxed. Inaba who was riding fluffily on Suzu's head crossed his arms as though to say 'That's good' while nodding his head going 'uh huh, uh huh'. (TN: Inaba still talk with Kansai accent here)

The comical gesture made Suzu's cheek loosened up further.

At that moment, Inaba rolled over vertically above Suzu's head. And then, with a handstand he crumpled Suzu's hair while rotating, he turned behind and let out a strong kick.

zugan-! Shockwave sound resounded, what Inaba blocked was a shining gray sword.

"…Really, this disgusting rabbit is just irritating."

"Eri-"

Yes, the one who had taken Suzu by surprise from behind and swung the sword was Eri herself. When Suzu looked behind her shoulder, her eyes met Eri's cold inhuman gaze that was like ice.

The slashed sword was blocked by Inaba's leg which was equipped by Hajime's special leg armor artifact, without that the sword would be in a direct course to Suzu's head. Looking from the strength of the leg armor and sword that were locked fiercely with each other, Eri was obviously trying to kill Suzu in the surprise attack.

Inaba twisted his body further. He rotated as though breakdancing on Suzu's head and fired a shockwave with his opposite foot. Characteristic magic 'Sky Walk's' derivative skill, 'Rending Spiral'——an ability that launched shockwave from the kick.

Eri flapped the gray wings on her back and somersaulted in the air while evading that shockwave.

"I heard that to evolve monster using metamorphosis magic will take quite some time thouugh. That monster, isn't it a little too abnormal?"

Eri asked in a bad mood while scrutinizing with her eyes.

"Well, that's because Inaba-san is special in various aspects. Most of this is from his base ability."

"What's with that, so cheating huuuh. But, that rabbit won't match the violence of number riiight? As expected, I don't think Suzu is employing so many monsters of that level riiight! ——'Wicked Wrap'!"

Eri materialized dark sphere in front of Inaba's eyes. Using that, the movement of Inaba who tried to immediately move was obstructed for a moment.

Using that timing Eri launched gray bombardment. It was a brutal bombardment that was enchanted with disintegration ability. Furthermore, the corpse beast soldiers that lurked in the ruined buildings leaped out all at once to block the path of escape.

"Everyone, please! ——'Holy Severance – World'!"

With Suzu's command, her subordinate monsters jumped out from the magic balls hanging on her waist. Two centipedes with body length of ten meter, ten one meter tall bees with striped pattern of black and red, four praying mantis where each of them had six sickles, one spider with eight reddish black eyes and four meter body length. This was Suzu's prided(?) bug squad!

While defending against the approaching grey flash with fifty overlapping Holy Severance and replenishing the disintegrated layer at the same time, Suzu further used her other iron fan to control the light petals——the 'Holy Severance – Sakura' to back up her subordinate monsters.

The soldier who swung red hot spear was met by the barrage of the missile bee. Ten bees all at once were rapid-firing with shooting rate of five shots per second, right after the shot impacted flower of explosion bloomed.

The blown away soldiers were finished off by the web of steel thread laid out at the valley of the ruined buildings by the steel thread spider sticking on the building wall. Their body was carved apart into pieces.

Furthermore, the soldiers who slipped through the barrage of missile needles and approached close were met by the wind blade praying mantises, wind blades that were unleashed from their six sickles minced up the soldiers.

The soldiers with defensive characteristic magic were defending using large shield while charging forward, from their shadow large sword user with 'Magic Shockwave' ability leaped out and swung their swords at the acid coiling centipedes protecting Suzu's back.

At the same time with the reddish black ripples spreading, violent shockwave came into being. The acid centipedes that got hit by those large swords were easily scattered.

The soldiers that used large sword and impact weaved through the gap of the scattered centipedes and approached Suzu. But, that moment, from all direction——more accurately, the fragments of the centipedes that scattered at the surrounding sprayed dissolving liquid like surging waves from their segmented parts.

The flawless surprise attack bathed the soldiers' whole body in dissolving liquid and made them wet as though they had encountered a squall, white smoke were rising grandly from their body and in the blink of eye they changed from human into bone model, they changed job into skeleton and at last they dissolved completely leaving not even dust behind.

So that the acid centipedes who had split into ten segments didn't hit their fellow subordinate monsters and their master Suzu, they performed the spraying of their dissolving liquid like bit weapon.

Reinforcement gushed out further from the shadow of the ruined buildings. However, the moment the soldiers jumped out, the ground and wall undulated and from there ants that had grown until one meter long jumped out with their jaws grinding, they crunched the soldiers and pulled them back into the ground or the wall.

Barrage of exploding missiles and terrifyingly sharp wind blades, heavy rain of dissolving liquids that accurately weaved through the gaps and rained down on the enemies, spider webs made from lines of death that were gradually tightening its encirclement, swarm of ants that ambushed from underground the moment anyone approached.

The corpse beast soldiers who were supposedly turned into super human with the combination of human skill and technique added with monster's toughness and characteristic magic, were killed one after another like a joke.

"Wai-, this is a joke right!? What's with those monsters-! Even Freed only have a few monsters that are evolved until that far!"

Eri spontaneously yelled angrily. Her gray bombardment was also unable to break through Suzu's protection, even though she should have obtained immense power! Her irritation grew violent.

And then, while maintaining her attack she tried to send grey feathers toward Suzu's subordinate monsters and darkness magic 'Slip Mind' toward Suzu.

There,

"Kyuu!"

"-!?"

The white rabbit materialized. His crimson eyes narrowed dangerously as though to say "Now you have really done it, youuu! I'm gonna punch you arounddd!". The extreme speed *zurararara—* left behind overlapping after images of Inaba, at the same time that strong leg shot out toward Eri.

Although Eri immediately defended using her gray wings, she was unable to endure the fierce destructive power and got blown away.

“KYUUuUUUU!!”

“You-, a mere beast, is getting carried away-“

Inaba chased. His rabbit ears flapped, he kicked on the air, polished kicking attacks that were like surging waves were launched right and left. Up middle bottom, high speed three stage kick attacked like a flash, before all those could be processed by the mind, Inaba rotated horizontally and a serial round kick filled with a lot of centrifugal force exploded.

PAN-! Along with such dry sound, air wall and shockwave were generated with Inaba’s kicking leg as the center. The effect wasn’t due to magical skill, but pure kicking speed that broke through the sound barrier.

Eri barely defended that storm of kicks using sword skill and apostle spec. Yes, Eri was barely dodging direct hit using superb sword skill. Ahead of the gaze of Suzu who exposed her shock of that, magic power of disintegration burst out from Eri’s whole body.

Unable to endure it, Inaba kicked on the air while returning to Suzu’s side.

“What’s this? Why am I getting pushed back? My body was changed into apostle’s body, I also obtained skills, I also prepared corpse beast soldiers, I made the supreme swordsman of the kingdom possess me, despite so, why? Hey, why do I have to get cornered like a loser? My opponent is not that monster right? Despite so, why? Hey, why? Why? Why!?”

Despite tiding over Inaba’s attack safely, Eri’s expression warped into something ugly and repeatedly said “Why?” in hysteric, while her hand was scratching her hair so roughly that her hair might get torn off. That figure had madness that was a little too thick to be waved off as just a child that was throwing tantrum because the reality wouldn’t go as she expected it to be.

Toward such Eri who was yelling “why?” repeatedly in madness, Suzu turned her eyes and voice that were calm like a quiet water surface.

“That’s obvious. It’s because Suzu wants to talk to Eri.”

“Ha?”

Suzu’s words made Eri stopped talking and leaked out dumbfounded voice. Her expression was befuddled from not understanding what Suzu meant.

“This is because Eri thought that Suzu isn’t worth to take on seriously. Suzu has worked hard in training to come here. In order to make Eri unable to ignore Suzu. Well, there is Nagumo-kun’s help so it feels pathetic though.”

“…Hee. And? You want to yell at me? This time you are going to make me grovel, and then sneer while cursing at me? Geez Suzu, you got that desperate for that kind of thing? You have become really distorted nicely aren’t youuu~. It’s ok then you knoow? How about trying to curse at me as you likeee? I’ll listen for you okaaay?”

Eri guessed what was inside Suzu’s heart and sneered. It seemed that she recovered her composure from feeling that she had seen the bottom of Suzu’s heart, that Suzu only miserably acted for the sake of revenge.

But, Suzu's expression didn't even twitch from such Eri. She kept looking straight at Eri and spoke out calmly.

"Curse? Sneer? No way. There is no way I can do that kind of thing. Because…Suzu was also using Eri the same like how you were using me after all."

"…What does that meaaan?"

Eri scrutinized Suzu with one eye and tilted her head. It appeared that she held interest toward Suzu's story. Even the soldiers right now were only surrounding Suzu without any sign of attacking.

"Just like Eri said, Suzu laughed foolishly and plainly acted like idiot, totally shallow, however Suzu isn't hated by anyone——Suzu lived like that until now. Because Suzu hated to be alone. Because being lonely is unbearable. Because Suzu want to be always included inside the circle of people."

"Well, Suzu is like that aren't youuu"

"Yep. Because Suzu was like that, the existence of 'best friend' was necessary. Suzu was thankful. Because, a child that isn't hated by anyone, if you change the way you look at it, that child is merely everybody's friend. Something like being equal and fair to everyone is really a heresy. That's why, an existence for Suzu to favor was necessary for Suzu. So that Suzu can let the surrounding know, that Suzu isn't that kind of heresy, that Suzu is a normal child who has a special friend with good relationship."

"Fuuun. So? You are saying that it was me?"

"Yep. Though of course, Suzu wasn't being best friend with Eri while being fully self-aware of that thinking. Right now when Suzu looked back, Suzu realize how Suzu acted like that. …That time when it became a pinch in Orcus, Shizuku and Kaori tried to be together at the end right? At that time, Suzu was convinced. Aa, Suzu and Eri are not like that huuh. Suzu desperately pretended not to notice that at the time though."

"….So? What do you want to say then?"

Suzu's words that sounded like she was talking to herself made Eri asked with a voice that sounded a little irritated. Toward that, Suzu looked straight at Eri and then she quietly lowered her head.

"…What?"

"Sorry, Eri. Eri said that Suzu is a convenient tool, but Suzu didn't even have the qualification to get shocked because of that. Suzu is also the same like Eri. Because Suzu treated Eri like a convenient tool."

"…Look hereee. You mean you are coming this far to say that kind of shitty trivial thing? You thought, that I'm even caring about that kind of thing? If that's true, then I cannot help but say that your head is gnawed whole by bugs inside. After obtaining Kouki-kun, someone like Suzu is just worthless thing like a rock in roadside for me you knooww?"

Eri's eyes warped, as though to say from the bottom of her heart that she had just listened to something stupid, however, Suzu replied while grinning.

"Yep, I know. This is just Suzu's self-satisfaction. Suzu just wanted to apologize to feel refreshed."

“You have become really brazen aren’t youuu. That’s all you want to talk about?”

“Nope. There is still something Suzu want to ask. Hey, Eri. Why did Eri fall in love with Kouki-kun?”

“Haa?”

There was a limit even for being out of place, Eri who was asked with a girls’ talk raised a disarrayed voice. Without minding such Eri, Suzu continued her question.

“Since the past Suzu somehow felt sympathy to Eri though, as expected did Eri had problem in home? Eri often came to play to Suzu’s home, but not even once Suzu could visit Eri’s home. So Suzu wonders if Eri actually felt hard to stay at your own home. You also nonchalantly avoided talking about your father and mother didn’t you? Your relation with your parents is bad? By any chance, did you get help from Kouki-kun when you were worried about that?”

It was a storm of questions that came pushing like surging waves as though Suzu was dancing tap dance on a minefield. Suzu was stepping in brazenly with muddy shoes into Eri’s childhood that could be said as her heart’s darkness. Furthermore, her question was strangely right on the mark so it was nasty.

From the point of view of Eri who had reminisced of her past just now, it felt like Suzu knew about that yet she still dared to dig up at the painful memory to throw at her.

And so, Eri’s answer was a wordless bombardment. Grey flashes mercilessly attacked Suzu from shortest distance. To that, Suzu defended from the front with ‘Holy Severance – World’ while grinning sweetly. The soldiers also moved once more, following that the subordinate monsters also reacted perfectly.

“Hey, come on, teach Suzu please, Eri. Suzu want to know about Eri. All the part where Suzu didn’t dare to step in even while calling you best friend, right now, Suzu wants to know.”

“Like this your personality has become really wicked isn’t iiit, Suzuu? Were you warped from the shock of my betrayaaal?”

“Don’t dodge the question here. Come on, teach Suzu? About Eri. What happened? Why are you warped? What kind of feeling are you looking at Kouki-kun with? Please, teach Suzu?”

“Aa, geez-, you are really annoyiiing!”

Suzu who continuously laid out barriers one after another at the same speed with the rate they were disintegrated, was piercing Eri with her straight gaze from between the gaps of the barriers and flashes. There wasn’t any scorn or contempt in those eyes, only sincerity of wanting to know about Eri was residing there.

Having such gaze directed at her, Eri became even more irritated. Her heart was disordered in a level that was far exceeding her own expectation. She used magic with that irritation staying in her heart.

“——’Lawless’!”

Darkness magic ‘Lawless’——a magic that blocked the target’s image supplementation for using magic.

How Suzu was maintaining the deploying speed of barriers in the level that could oppose disintegration ability was possible because there was the abbreviation in her magic invocation using image

supplementation. Consequently, if Suzu received interference in that, naturally her barrier's deploying speed would drop——that was how it should be.

"Why-!?"

Eri's shocked voice resounded. Ahead of her widely opened gaze, Suzu was continuing to lay out her barriers without any change. Her speed was equal with before.

"-, you are interfering with the image supplementation aren't you. Thanks to that now Suzu doesn't have any leeway left."

"Don't tell me…you are saying that you were going easy on the barrier deployment just nooow!?"

"Yep. After all Suzu is a barrier master. In protection Suzu won't lose to anyone. Well even though Suzu said that, there is also the help of Nagumo-kun's artifact, if this is a bombardment from a real apostle, Suzu won't be able to say this though."

Suzu squinted and looked at Eri while whispering "Suzu cannot block Kaorin's bombardment after all."

"Eri's body. Indeed it looks like you are able to use apostle's power, but you are unable to do it perfectly like Kaori I think? Twenty percent…nope, looks like the spec dropped by thirty percent. You also cannot use the experience trace among apostles aren't you? The sword skill before this, Suzu guess you got it from Melt-san using necromancy? If we are talking about the pinnacle of the knight's sword art, Suzu cannot think of anyone else except that person."

"-, don't get carried away!"

After having been analyzed and gotten seen through various things one after another, Eri was feeling like she had been totally seen through because of how all those analyses were correct. Eri raised an angry yell. The color of scorn and composure that filled her expression at the beginning was already gone, there was only the display of lack of composure that merely wished to erase even for a second faster the opponent she was unable to stomach.

"Eri, Suzu won't avert her eyes anymore. Because, Suzu doesn't want to overlook what's important and lose everything helplessly again. Suzu doesn't want to keep being ignorant anymore. That's why, please. Teach Suzu about Eri."

"You keep saying teach me, teach me, annoying! What are you going to do after knowing such thing at this lateee!? You want to grasp my weakness and then attack me mentallyyy!?"

Eri fired a large number of feathers from her gray wings. The bombardment circled around and launched an attack from all directions in a plan to break the equilibrium. The soldiers were blocked from approaching by the iron wall formation that Suzu's subordinate monster formed, with that Eri had to do something herself. She was lamenting that she got separated from Kouki who excelled in offensive power.

But, as expected that plan of Eri was crushed by Suzu. At the other side of the barrier, Suzu elegantly waved her iron fans. Then, *zaaaaaaa* such sound came from the surrounding and light petals gathered, drawing spiral around Suzu.

And then, the spiral swallowed all the soaring feathers where the two magic neutralized each other. The petals were erased, however, the petals were immediately replenished again and showed no sign of decreasing at all.

Suzu sent her words to Eri as though nothing happened.

“You are wrong. You see, Suzu want to know about Eri. Suzu will know, look properly, feel, think……then Suzu wants to become friend with Eri, one more time.”

“——What are you saying?”

Eri’s bombardment unconsciously weakened. The grey feathers also flew toward wrong directions. That was just how much Suzu’s words were incomprehensible and lacking in common sense for Eri.

That was only natural. After how she betrayed them that nastily, killing a lot of people, and furthermore she was trying to kill them right now. If someone was saying that they ‘want to be friend’ toward such person, she could only think that there was something wrong with that person’s head. If this was the mental attack of Suzu-style, then in a sense it could be said as effective. Though until the end it was effective only in the meaning of taking her by surprise.

Suzu continued her words to that Eri. Her voice was powerful, her gazing eyes were endlessly clear.

“Is that strange I wonder? Yep, that’s strange isn’t it. Eri has done bad things after all. Even now you are trying to kill Suzu.”

“…What, so just as I thought you have gone mad?”

“Nope, Suzu is sane. Even Suzu herself is thinking that it’s strange huuh, but, this is Suzu’s true feeling without any falsehood. Because, Suzu remember.”

“Remember?”

“Yep. Eri’s smile.”

Hearing those words, Eri’s expression turned even more confused.

“Eri was always a child that smiled reservedly from slight distance away, but right now Suzu understands that it was fake smile. But, but see. Like the time when Eri came for sleepover at Suzu’s home, or the time when the two of us talk leisurely on the way home after school, or when both of us slackened up at the nearby park when there is really nothing to do on holiday, your languid smile that you suddenly showed at those time, or your smile that looked a little cynic, or your smile to Suzu that looked exasperated, but also looked a little amused, Suzu remembered those.”

“…”

“Surely those were, smiling faces that the ‘Eri who is acting’ must not show isn’t it right? Those smiles were fragments of the true Eri that couldn’t be shown to other people, isn’t that right? Eri rested your heart just for a smidgen, only when Suzu was with Eri, isn’t that right? You see, that’s what Suzu think.”

Eri was wordless. Her eyes couldn’t be seen because they were hidden by her front hair. The shadow created from the light was also hiding Eri’s expression.

Suzu's words echoed. The Suzu who feared being hated and wouldn't step forward had gone. Even if she had to take the risk of what she wanted slipping away from her hand, she would still take a step forward. Because she had learned, that ahead of the constant risk, there lied what she exactly wanted.

"Eri, come back. Together with Kouki-kun. Something like a world with only two people is just sad. Suzu, want to be together with Eri. It's better to be together forever even after this. Suzu want to become best friend with Eri, this time for sure."

"…"

Suzu closed one of her iron fans with a snap and hung it on her waist. When she noticed, the feather attack had stopped. There was no need to control the light petals anymore. And then, like that her empty hand reached out straight toward Eri.

"If you take this hand, Suzu won't let anyone hurt Eri. No matter what anyone says, even if, Suzu have to oppose Nagumo-kun, Suzu swear that she will protect Eri!"

The gray bombardment was gradually losing momentum. Before long, it was decreasing until it became like a thin string and like that it melted into the air and vanished.

Suzu also erased her barrier. At her surrounding her monsters were standing by quietly. The corpse beast soldiers also stopped moving.

Her words reached her. Perhaps even her heart…Suzu thought that and her lips broadened slightly.

Ahead of Suzu's gaze, Eri quietly raised her face. What was reflected in those eyes was the color of passion and happiness——not, but coldness that was like ice filled with endless scorn.

And then, her words too.

"Are you an idiot?"

"__"

Suzu loosened cheeks instantly stiffened. Right after that, a huge gray magic circle manifested on the sky.

Eri's feather attack wasn't only intended to circle around Suzu's barrier and attacked her. Amidst the turmoil, Eri secretly slipped her feathers toward the sky. She bought time by going along with Suzu's talk and created a huge magic circle there with her grey feathers.

That magic circle was shining gray even while spurting out muddy black miasma. That shape was exactly the same like the crack of space that appeared above God Mountain.

The déjà vu that Suzu harbored was immediately proven to be correct. As expected, similar with the crack of space a lot of monsters appeared from there. What Eri created seemed to be a summoning magic circle.

"The nonsense is enough until this far isn't it? Just when I thought what are you going to talk about…Suzu really exposed your stupidity plainly here aren't youuu? Thank you for letting me buying so much timeee. Well theeen, can you die swallowed by these waves of monster?"

"…"

This time it was Suzu who was the silent one. From the sky, monsters that could fly or fought midair appeared continuously. The number of the surviving corpse beast soldiers was also still around seventy.

In contrast, Suzu's subordinate monsters, there were three missile bees, and one wind blade praying mantis, although they didn't die but they bore heavy wounds that made them unable to continue to fight. Although it was only a few but it was still a decrease in Suzu's fighting strength.

No matter how strong Inaba was, in front of the violence of number it would be only a problem of time before he was overwhelmed.

And then, far away the sound of fierce battle was still resounding, the possibility of Shizuku and Ryuutaro coming for Suzu's reinforcement was remarkably low.

And so, Eri's expression warped in ecstasy. Indeed, Suzu's strength made her got cold sweat, but when the lid was opened, Suzu pointlessly wasted her time to persuade Eri and now she got the situation reversed, it was really an amusing joke. "Really what a stupid girl", Eri whispered one more time inside her mouth.

"I am your be-st-fri-end yes, even after a fashion? Then I'll at least listen to your last will you know?"

A great number of monsters covered the sky, amidst the darkness that fell on the battlefield like a dark cloud, Eri lifted up her sword and said such thing. Most likely, when that sword was swung down, an all-out attack would start.

In contrast, Suzu who realized that her word didn't reach Eri's heart and now she fell into an absolutely desperate situation said,

"Eri. You looked down on Suzu too much. ——Inaba-san! Please take care of the magic circle!"

"Kyukyuu!"

Taking out the iron fan that she settled on her waist before, as though to say that she had resolved for everything, Suzu stared back straight at Eri with eyes filled with determination without any unease or agitation there.

That excessively strong gaze made Eri took a step back unconsciously. When she noticed what she did she gritted her teeth. And then, feeling fed up with all the worthless talk, she swung down her sword that was equal with the scythe of the death god.

At that moment, the monsters in the sky and the corpse beast soldiers attacked all at once.

However, the corpse beast soldiers went toward the monsters.

"Wha-, what is-. Even though my command reached them properly-!"

Looking at the sudden friendly fire which began between the soldiers and monsters, Eri yelled angrily with confused tone mixed in. Eri's command was certainly reaching the soldiers without any obstruction. Despite so, they mistook their target and assaulted the monsters.

The one who brought the answer to the confused Eri was Suzu herself.

“Suzu’s black crest butterfly——what do you think Suzu was letting them flying around for?”

“Do, don’t tell me…”

“Finally noticed? You see, these children, they can scatter scales with various traits. Looks like the soldiers has been showered with enough. Right now, they should be looking at the monsters as Suzu and Suzu’s monsters.”

Eri felt like clicking her tongue. It seemed Suzu was thoroughly prepared.

Furthermore, at that time, a smashed sound resounded as though making doubly sure everything was screwed for Eri. Looking at the sky, a part of the summoning circle was blown away. At that spot, there was Inaba in a stance of kicking. He slipped through the gap between the monsters fully covering the sky in high speed and destroyed the magic circle.

The corpse soldiers who were originally the soldiers and knights of the kingdom, who were experts in anti-monster battle, with their specs increased like a joke they now killed the summoned monsters one after another.

There, naturally the subordinate monsters of Suzu, also the injured ones were healed by the corpse soldiers with healing ability because they looked like allies. After they returned to the battle line, the monsters in the sky were completely reduced to the hunted side.

Eri gritted her teeth while making the monsters to prioritize dealing with the black crest butterflies. The loyal monsters headed toward the butterflies fluttering in the battlefield and rushed them all at once.

At that moment,

DOOOOON!! DOOOOON!! DOOOOON!!

Flowers of explosion bloomed one after another at the sky of the ruined city. The moment the butterflies were touched, they instantly exploded.

The voice of Suzu resounded to the dumbfounded Eri.

“Did you think that Suzu can really subdue a total of a hundred butterfly monsters? Even though only three days has passed?”

“…Are you saying there are also fakes there?”

“Yep. More than half are Nagumo-kun’s handmade butterfly golem. In exchange of scales they are carrying a large amount of combusting powder, see. Although it’s only mini treasure warehouse, seems like gunpowder that cannot be compared with dynamite is packed full into it. How scary isn’t it.”

Eri narrowed her eyes. When she looked, she didn’t notice before but there were black crest butterflies clinging on the head or the back of all the soldiers. Anybody would understand what the meaning of that was. While the soldiers exterminated the monsters and decreased their number, simultaneously it was also the countdown for the death of the soldiers.

“…This is checkmate? In this kind of place? Ahahah, how strangeeee. For Suzu to be the one who is destroying my plan. Even though you could just grovel like before without standing up again. Is this, also because of that monster I wondeeer.”

“Suzu don’t think she can say that Nagumo-kun has no relation in this. But, Suzu is here is unmistakably by Suzu’s own will. Because Suzu thought that if Suzu leaves this alone then Eri will be killed by Nagumo-kun.”

“What? Are you planning to say that you saved me I wonder?”

“Yep. Suzu come in order to save Eri. Because Suzu wants to restart with Eri one more time.”

“…enough already.”

Eri fell quiet once more. But, different from until now, it was only for a moment. Right after that, she invoked darkness magic ‘Slip Mind’ to Suzu while at the same time leaped at her. In a straight line, with her eyes carrying killing intent.

As though to say, would Suzu kill her or would she get killed by her, there was nothing else that could be done but to choose between those two choices. As though to cut away all of Suzu’s words as complete nonsense. As though to declare that it was impossible for her to take Suzu’s hand after this late.

“AaAAAAAAAAAAAA-!! JUST DIEEEEEEEEEEE-!!”

Toward Eri who performed suicide attack while yelling an abnormal shriek, Suzu bit her lip tightly. Her feeling wasn’t conveyed to Eri. It couldn’t be conveyed. Frustrating. Mortifying. Her reached out hand——didn’t reach.

“Why, it has become like this…surely, Suzu mustn’t say such words isn’t it.”

Suzu who looked like she was laughing and crying, bit her lip and blood trickled down, then she swept her fan.

At that moment, barriers were deployed enveloping the rushing Eri. Naturally, Eri used her disintegration ability and immediately cut apart the barrier but she was forced to stop for a moment. That was a fatal opening that was created forcefully by Suzu.

The moment Eri destroyed the barrier, the light petals that were controlled by the other iron fan rushed to Eri and wrapped her. Eri tried to sweep them away using her gray wings and bombardment and also her sword, but the light petals were like leaves fluttering by the wind, or possibly like river water that flowed unhurriedly, they swam in the air and evaded the attacks.

And then, right after that,

“Everything into the light, ——’Holy Severance – Falling Flower of Light’.”

Light exploded.

All the light petals exploded in a chain reaction. A combination technique of ‘Holy Severance – Sakura’ and ‘Holy Severance – Burst’. Surrounded by flower storm without any place to escape, impacts were fired inside without any spot spared from it.

With a timing that matched that, further thunderous sounds rang out consecutively in the battlefield. Along with those explosive sounds, several grand flowers of flame and impact bloomed proudly in the sky of the ruined city. The corpse beast soldiers that finished defeating the monsters were swallowed by the self-explosion of the dummy golems of black crest butterfly attached on their body and died.

Suzu was bathed in orange light by the several explosive flames. On her head, the fluffy Inaba fell. Inaba's fluffy front leg patted on Suzu's head *peshi peshi* as though to console her.

From inside the flame of light, *bobat* sound rang and a silhouette fell. White smoke was rising from Eri's whole body and she fell on the ground. Her four limbs were twisted to strange direction, her ash gray wings were already scattered. Magical shockwave also exploded simultaneously at that time so her magic power should be already blown away too.

Suzu quickly waved her iron fan.

"——'Light Halo'."

Then, halos of light linked into a net that materialized at the falling point of Eri. Eri was caught by that and she was dropped on the ground.

Suzu accompanied by Inaba landed down beside Eri.

"Kahah, gohoh……just, kill me."

It appeared she barely retained her consciousness. Eri didn't even move her empty eyes toward Suzu, she was staring far away and demanded for the killing blow.

"Eri…"

"Fri, end? Impos, sible…dying, is….better"

"…"

There was no disdain or contempt. Eri talked as though she wasn't looking at Suzu, to that, Suzu bit her lip tightly.

"Everything, is just, the worst. …I, only…"

"Eri? Only…what? Tell Suzu."

"…"

The words that stopped midway might be words that spilled out unconsciously even for Eri. Even with Suzu asking, she didn't show any sign of opening her mouth anymore. It was obvious that Eri's body was in a state where life was spilling out from her. Although her body was upgraded with the technique of apostle creation, the might of Suzu's trump card the 'Holy Severance – Falling Flower of Light' wasn't something half-assed. Without any treatment, she would only expire like this.

Suzu took out a container in the shape of test tube from her 'Treasure Warehouse II'. The content was healing medicine. It was something that had its effect dramatically increased by Hajime's metamorphosis magic, so it had ten times the effect of the highest grade healing medicine. It couldn't

be like god water that immediately completely recovered the health, but it was able to keep alive someone even from a near death state.

But, Eri who saw Suzu taking that out and guessed what she was going to do, pierced Suzu with a severe gaze that was unthinkable coming from someone who was about to die. There was no word. But, those eyes talked more eloquently than anything. She would decline any pity from Suzu even if she was on the verge of death.

Suzu clutched the healing medicine tightly, wondering with clenched teeth if this was going to be their conclusion. This was something that she was half-resigned to. Even so, as expected her heart clenched tightly.

But, she couldn't be half-hearted. She couldn't reach Eri's heart. She couldn't reach her. She couldn't half-heartedly let her stay alive here. The path to let Eri live and brought her back wasn't by sheer strength, it had to be done by connecting their heart and pulling her hand. If Suzu acted half-heartedly here, the tragedy of that day would be repeated once more in the future.

That was the only thing that she absolutely mustn't do. A wish that blindly believed at convenient future and averted eyes from reality, what kind of future such thing would be connected with was something that Suzu understood really well to the depth of her bone.

Then, at the very least not by other's hand, this should be done by her hand.

That was Suzu's resolve.

Because although it was warped and imperfect but Eri was once her best friend. And then even now, she was able to wish to be best friend with her once more. That was why…

Suzu stored back the healing medicine. And then, in exchange her hand gripped the iron fan tightly.

Suzu and Eri's gazes crossed.

But, at that time, suddenly immense magic power burst up from a place that was separated from them by several ruined buildings between here. Before long the pure white magic power that stabbed the sky changed into a shape of human ten meters tall, the arm of that giant was swung down below.

The fierce impact was transmitted even until the place where Suzu and Eri were at.

"…Kouki, kun."

Eri opened her eyes and whispered.

Right after that, the light giant dispersed. It was as though it showed the fate of the caster…

"Kouki, kun…Kouki-kun!!"

"E, Eri-!?"

Eri's body that should have been in the death's door instantly shined gray.

And then, at the next moment her flickering wings and ragged body flew away with immense force toward the place where the light giant was seen.

Suzu who was unable to immediately move from being completely dumbfounded returned to her senses and chased after Eri in hurry.

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Chapter 167 – The Respective Conclusions

After Suzu pursued Eri and vanished at the other side of the ruined buildings, Shizuku and Ryuutaro held a battle evenly against the attacking sixty corpse beast soldiers while also opposing Kouki.

If Ryuutaro who metamorphosed his own flesh and invoked advanced metamorphosis magic 'Sixth Heaven's Demon Transformation' to display a monster's special characteristic approached Kouki, then the soldiers would try to hinder him or possibly take him by surprise, but Shizuku would deal with them.

The swarm of black katana she received from Hajime——'Living Swords' rushed freely around the battlefield, they cooperated like a single living thing and grouped on the soldiers and cut them down.

"'Group Two – Flash Blossom'! 'Group Five – Flying Claw'!"

Shizuku's command echoed in the battlefield. Following that command, inside the swarm of twenty katana, four katana cut apart the large shields of the corpse beast soldiers who were possessing defensive type characteristic magic, even space was cut along with them. And then, the ranks of the

soldiers became disordered. Four more black katana launched wind blades toward the soldiers who lost their steel shields.

The wind blades soaring invisibly with spectacular timing and mercilessly cut apart two large shield holders. The soldiers didn't get bisected because of their high defensive power, but both their arms were severed from the shoulder and rotated in the air.

"'Group Three – Draw Sky'! 'Group Four – Flash Blossom'!"

Furthermore, nimble soldiers were using the shield holder soldiers as stepping stone, jumping in the air to stab Ryuutaro in the back, but they were pulled back forcefully by four black katana shining dark blue. The large sword and spear they held in their hand were attached tight *gakin* to the blade of the black katana flying in the air.

The large sword user and spear user who exposed fatal opening were immediately split vertically into two by the space rifts launched behind them. As expected, although they were corpse beast soldiers they would be rendered unable to fight without fail after getting bisected vertically like that.

Even the soldiers with healing type characteristic magic would need time to heal the loss of limbs or from getting bisected. And then, there was no way Shizuku would give them that kind of time so this was the same like removing them from the stage.

The soldiers attempted simultaneous attacks from up, down, left, and right to such Shizuku. Reddish black glints' of eyes stabbed Shizuku, the killing intents rode the wind and caressed her skin.

Yet, a soft mentality that would shrink back against something of that level had already been thrown away by Shizuku. Especially now that at her side she had the swarm of black katana given as protection to her from the man she was in love with.

"'First Group – Gravity Flash'! Cut apart, 'Soaring Claw – Four Ream'!!"

Four black katana pointed their tip outward at the four directions around Shizuku and then they orbited around her, the katana even rotated with twirls that looked elegant. The skill that was invoked was a skill that could temporarily cut gravity——'Gravity Flash'.

The result, the approaching soldiers were suddenly released from the chain of gravity and their balance was greatly broken. Not letting such decisive opening escaping, Shizuku's sword-draw slashed. With a speed to the degree where her sword arm looked blurred, four sword-draws were repeated within an instant. Each time bell-like sound *clink* rang, invisible slash made the head of the soldiers flew.

Furthermore, from behind them the black katana that were launched to the surrounding returned with fierce speed, cutting into pieces the headless soldiers without any difficulty.

Shizuku's 'Living Swords' were basically organized into five groups with four katana in each group. By chanting the group name and skill name, she could give the same order to one group. Also, every single one of the twenty katana had their own respective name like 'Slash One, Slash Two', Shizuku could also give an order to individual sword using those names. When Shizuku chanted the name of the technique, each of the Living Swords would attack the enemy with their own judgment using sword art based on Yaegashi-style that wasn't inferior to the skill of Shizuku herself.

Exactly as the name of ‘Living Swords’, all the black katana could have mutual understanding and image sharing with Shizuku using metamorphosis magic, so all the black katana could be controlled as the display of Shizuku’s will without any time lag.

And, at that time, an angry yell reached Shizuku who was evading the fierce assault of the soldiers.

“Shizuku! Dodge!”

“＿＿”

A warning from Ryuutaro. Without confirming the content of that warning, Shizuku activated ‘Air Force’ and ‘Ground Shrinker’ and evacuated from that spot in one breath.

Right after that, the spot where Shizuku was at just a moment before was shot through by the flash of Heaven Might along with thunderous roar. One soldier who was swallowed in a bad luck was erased not even leaving any dust behind.

“Kouki. Bastaard, you purposefully overlapped the line of fire. Now you’ve really done it.”

“I’m thoroughly familiar with Ryuutaro’s movement pattern after all. It’s really easy to guide your movement.”

“Shut up! If it’s about that, then even me also know how you gonna move!”

Ryuutaro rapidly approached Kouki with his ogre flesh. The scene of the huge body that easily passed two-meter scattering shockwave around while advancing had the intensity that could make anyone felt their stomach went cold.

“That’s pointless.”

However, on the other hand, Kouki’s expression didn’t even twitch. And then, without any chanting or gesture, the dragon on his back——the avatar of Heaven Might was controlled and shaped into a shield. Although, because the shield was made from Heaven Might itself, even though it was taking the shape of a shield it was still the light of destruction that contained the property of attack power of annihilation.

“Come on! ‘Folded Vajra’!”

Ryuutaro didn’t falter. He crossed both his arms and applied the special trait of the ogre he metamorphosed into, the deployment of multiple ‘Vajra’. It was a derivative technique that boasted toughness in the same level with concentrated reinforcement, this ‘Vajra’ was folded into double and triple layers and formed a protection of steel wall.

Ryuutaro who was turned into a single steel mass charged into the shield of Heaven Might without stopping.

And then, even while his ‘Folded Vajra’ was blown away, he splendidly managed to breakthrough with only some wound.

“Yes. I thought that if it’s Ryuutaro he would surely do that.”

The voice that resounded there was Kouki’s calm voice.

The moment Ryuutaro charged through the shield, with excellent timing a breath attack approached him. Ryuutaro who had just released his ‘Vajra’ was approached by destructive light where it wouldn’t end well for him if it hit even with his tough flesh of ogre.

But, even while being illuminated by the light of Heaven Might, Ryuutaro showed a fearless smile. As though to say “I thought you are going to do that yeah?”.

“Come, wolf king of the abyss, ‘Sixth Heaven’s Demon Transformation’!”

Right after that, the breath of Heaven Might swallowed where Ryuutaro was.

At the same time, Kouki turned his holy sword to the side and took a defensive stance, there *gakin* hard and powerful impact sound rang.

The tip of a claw was barely stopped in front of Kouki’s eyes. The one who unleashed that claw was a bizarre shape with wolf head, furry upper body, and five sharp claws growing. It looked exactly like a werewolf in a fairy tale.

Kouki wordlessly brandished the light dragon to attack. But, when the light dragon’s claw swept at where Ryuutaro was, Ryuutaro had already circled to the opposite side and his roundhouse kick attacked Kouki’s shoulder. That abnormal speed blew away Kouki who could only gaze in wonderment.

And, the next moment Ryuutaro caught up to the blown away Kouki, his wicked claw swung.

“Kuh”

The outrageous speed and offensive power made Kouki raised a groan reflexively. Even so, while repelling the claw with his sword, he commanded the light dragon and let flew countless light bullets. The Heaven Might’s light that swept up like gatling gun became a counterattack that assaulted Ryuutaro, but Ryuutaro evaded all of that while leaving behind afterimages.

Metamorphosis magic ‘Sixth Heaven’s Demon Transformation’——Mode Werewolf. Compared to the ogre shape the power and endurance of this from dropped, but the speed increased to an incomparable degree.

Ryuutaro who slipped through the light bullets rushed into Kouki’s bosom and lunged with a slash of sharp claws.

“Something like this-“

Instantly, Kouki broke the shape of the light dragon and exploded the light of the Heaven Might. Light swelled up all at once with Kouki as the center. Kouki who turned into a star made Ryuutaro unable to endure and withdrew back.

But, his body was quite burned from what he couldn’t evade. Ryuutaro had immediately crossed both his arms and protected his vital spots, but this model wasn’t suited for its endurance. His fur was greatly carbonized and smoked while he was made to take distance.

“Ryuutaro! You okay!?”

“Ou, I only got hit a little bit there. Just this much is no biggie.”

Shizuku who cut apart several soldiers and rushed toward Ryuutaro poured down special healing liquid she received from Hajime on Ryuutaro's head. This time Ryuutaro's body smoked up for a different reason while Ryuutaro's wolfish gaze glared at Kouki.

"Rather than that, as expected that Heaven Might is troublesome. It changes shape too much. I cannot attack him when it matters."

"Then, let's try it with the two of us this time. Thanks to Ryuutaro holding back Kouki, I have finished taking care the majority of the soldiers."

"Okay. Suzu is also going all out after all. No way we can say that we cannot win even with two people here."

"Right. We are going to beat up that idiot quickly!"

"Ou-!"

Confirming that Kouki changed the shape of Heaven Might into a light dragon once more and fired breath attack to them, Shizuku and Ryuutaro dispersed in one breath.

Looking at that, Kouki shook his head once and then burst out with even more magic power, his expression was an expression of determination.

"I'm getting worried for Eri. I got surprised in various things by the two of you, however, you two has used up your trump card right? I'll end this right now."

Kouki simultaneously invoked the mini light dragons, the Heaven Might version of Sky Flying Sword, and the Heaven Might version of Heaven Meteor Rain in the attempt to overrun the two altogether with the battlefield.

The current Kouki was just like a fortress that randomly shot laser cannons. The light of Heaven Might that was formed into various shapes around Kouki thoroughly destroyed the ruined buildings in the area while approaching Ryuutaro and Shizuku to envelop them.

But, putting it another way it also could be said that it was a rough attack that lack refinement. For that reason, Ryuutaro laughed. Because he had guessed that Kouki who got impatient after witnessing their persistence would surely rely on large technique.

Right now it was the time to show their trump card that was prepared for against Kouki.

"Come, great tree that pierces the sky-, 'Sixth Heaven's Demon Transformation'-!"

Amidst the many approaching Heaven Might, the fur of the werewolf fell out, and that body transformed. Everywhere throughout the body turned gnarled, the skin was dyed into blackish brown color, the hair also changed into deep green color. In all that changes, only the eyes were releasing glaring light of reddish black color.

Right after that, Ryuutaro was attacked by small light dragons and the meteor shower of Heaven Might. Ryuutaro didn't even dodge, he charged toward Kouki while being swallowed into the light.

"Ryuutaro, sleep for a while for me."

Kouki was convinced that Ryuutaro was defeated and murmured that. Putting aside the ogre shape that was specialized for defense, there was no way for Ryuutaro right now who didn't seem to use 'Vajra' to be able to endure that.

But, that thinking was immediately proved to be wrong.

"Don't screw with me. No way I'm going to sleep before beating you until you wake up."

"Wha-!?"

Ryuutaro leaped out unhurt from inside the light.

And then, Kouki who was completely taken by surprise and shown opening was punched by the fist of the rapidly approaching Ryuutaro. The straight punch that lunged straight stabbed toward Kouki's stomach across the armor. The aim that accurately struck to the solar plexus produced a grand impact that was transmitted toward the inside of Kouki's body without anything spared, whipping up his internal organ.

"Gohah!?"

Kouki knew well about the destructive power of Ryuutaro's fist, but still, even with his holy armor and impact mitigation skill, the terrific power that might blow away his consciousness made his mind fell into chaos for a moment. His throat was blocked by the blood he vomited from the unbearable pain.

Metamorphosis magic 'Sixth Heaven's Demon Transformation'——Model Trent. It was a plant type monster that lived at floor ninety of the abyss. Its special trait was to absorb light and converted the light energy that it absorbed. The converted energy could be changed into anything, whether magic power, stamina, or pure muscle power.

Yes, Ryuutaro with this trent shape absorbed the light of Heaven Might that was a light element magic, he then converted that into physical strength.

Because the impact didn't disperse and was concentrated at one point when it was let out, Kouki didn't get blown away, his body was lifted up and laid down on the fist. To this Ryuutaro laughed fiercely at Kouki.

"Yoo, are you waking up a little with this, best friend."

"Guh, Ryuta——"

"This one is a freebie. Just how long you are going to sleep talking huh!"

"——Gua!?"

The face of Kouki who couldn't move immediately from the impact was punched by Ryuutaro's fist that was like a rock. *Goba-!* Incomprehensible sound rang out from the attack to the face, Kouki scattered around nosebleed while getting blown away.

Even so, his body that was reinforced by Ehito was barely able to keep the connection of his consciousness. He somehow controlled the light dragon that was connected with him and tried to fix his posture.

In a moment, a goosebump suddenly went through Kouki's spine. At the same time, his 'Presence Detection' notified him of the existence of the swordsman lying in wait in the direction where he was blown away.

Naturally, the one who endured the storm of Heaven Might and corpse beast soldiers and circled around was Shizuku. She was standing still in her stance of sword-drawing, while compressing her magic power to an amazing density. Her sheath was creaking loudly as though unable to endure the power, dark blue magic power was overflowing out from the mouth of the sheath.

Kouki desperately attempted to put a brake on himself while calling Shizuku's name with a voice that sounded similar with a groan from the burden in his body.

"Shi, zuku-"

"Be obedient and accept it, this one attack."

Like that, while her figure vanished with 'No Beat' Shizuku stepped forward while faintly whispering "——'Soul Demolition'". The flash of sword-draw that was unleashed along with that whisper drew a splendid straight line on the air and bisected Kouki.

"——"

The definite sensation of a slash passing through inside his body made Kouki screamed wordlessly while feeling that he was unmistakably cut.

But, he finally escaped from the impact Ryuutaro inflicted on him while seeing Shizuku who passed through him and stayed unmoving in slashing posture, and then he managed to stop moving. Kouki's eyes reflexively widened, and then, feeling dumbfounded his hand crawled on his body.

Under his hands there wasn't any sign of cut for even a bit, his body was certainly still connected in one piece safely.

"Just, what in the world…-, what, my magic power is-"

For a moment, Kouki was thinking something convenient that the feeling of getting cut was only his imagination and as expected Shizuku was unable to cut him, but right after that, he was made to know that Shizuku's slash had definitely reached him.

The light dragon that Kouki had on his back was split into two with the upper part slipping off diagonally, but it dispersed all at once right after. Not only that, even the meteor swarm of Heaven Might – Heaven Meteor Rain that he launched, also the flying slashes of Heaven Might – Sky Flying Sword, and also the small light dragons that flew around like all-range weapon, they were all dispersed.

In that situation, a feeling of lethargy attacked him like it was only natural. Kouki's body staggered and fell on the ground. Even his flight using the light dragon, also the 'Air Force' from his boot became unable to be maintained.

Even so in order to avoid falling to his death Kouki landed on his knees. Shizuku and Ryuutaro landed down in front of him.

"Shi, zuku, what, did you do…"

Kouki asked with trembling voice.

“’Soul Demolition’——the base of this skill is the ability of soul magic that could interfere with the immaterial of the living thing. This skill will search for the source of power in the target. The target’s magic power, stamina, mental, those things that eye couldn’t see could even be cut with this. Cutting only what you want to cut…the farthest territory that a swordsman should reach, I cheated and progressed until there.” (TN: There is the implication that she was asking Hajime’s help in accomplishing this.)

Kouki’s eyes opened wide at Shizuku’s explanation. His expression was dumbfounded as though to say “What the hell with that”.

It was only normal for him to be like that. After all Shizuku didn’t affect Kouki’s body and only cut apart the magic power overflowing inside the body. Indeed, it could be said that cutting only what one wanted to cut regardless of any obstacle was the swordsman’s farthest territory.

Shizuku was being humble saying that she was cheating as a swordsman thanks to the help of the black katana, but in actuality just by invoking ‘Soul Demolition’ wouldn’t so easily let the user choose the target to cut.

After all, it was an act of penetrating every factor of the human body and cut only the target. It would take a really clear image supplementation and above all a tenacious will to accomplish that. A clear will without any hesitation, of cutting only what one wanted to cut while absolutely not wounding anything outside it at all.

It sounded easy to do just by listening to the explanation, but it was actually not as simple as it sounds, it was something impossible if the swordsman wasn’t someone at Shizuku’s level. At the very least even Kouki who learned the same Yeagashi-style wouldn’t be able to use ‘Soul Demolition’ perfectly.

“…But, that was a bit of a blunder. I thought that I’m going to sever the curse of ‘Bind Soul’ with the attack just now, but I couldn’t reach it because it was protected by magic power. …You are still watching a convenient dream right now aren’t you?”

While the swarm of katana was following on her back, with a *cling* sound Shizuku prepared the black katana in her hand once more, seeing that Kouki’s expression distorted.

“Shizu, ku. You couldn’t, cut me, because…you are still, thinking of me, in your heart….that feeling, still remained, right? Nagumo’s, brainwashing, isn’t perfect. …I cannot, feel your killing intent, is the proof of that.”

“Kouki…”

“It’s, fine. Ryuutaro also, didn’t, try to kill me. I will save the two of you——”

Kouki’s words were halted. Because Shizuku unleashed the ‘Soul Demolition’ with the drawing out of her black katana. Ryuutaro who was crossing his arms on the side while wrinkling up his eyebrows patted Shizuku’s shoulder as though to say ‘thanks for the hard work’.

Shizuku also sighed ‘fuuh’ while sheathing her katana back. That was because she was convinced that Eri’s ‘Bind Soul’ was cut. With this, the mind that was filled all over with inconsistencies planted by Eri should be crumbling.

“Kouki. How do you feel? With this the brainwashing should be released already. What have you been doing until now. What are happening right now…you understand aren’t you?”

“…”

“Well, no matter. Anyway, just reflect on yourself there. Later we gotta chase after Nagumo and others quickly, punch that shitty god, and then help the guys fighting on the surface……we are going back yeah, Kouki.”

“…”

Shizuku and Ryuutaro called at Kouki, but there wasn’t any reply from Kouki. He kept being down on the ground on all fours without even lifting his face. His expression was hidden by his hair and completely unseen.

Although, even though he was not replying it seemed that he wasn’t in silence. The ears of Ryuutaro and Shizuku caught the faint sound. A small voice that didn’t even form words. Kouki was hanging his head down while whispering inaudibly.

“Kouki?”

“————Lies, impossible. This is strange. Absolutely, wrong. Because I am correct. I was just being brainwashed. For me to be the enemy…to Shizuku…to Ryuutaro…what had I done…even though it shouldn’t be like this…even though I just want to act righteously…I just want to be a hero…just like Jii-chan…that’s, all…why something like this is…everything is stolen…because Shizuku and Kaori too were stolen by that guy…Ryuutaro is also that guy’s ally…”

“O, oi. Kouki!”

“That’s right…this is a trap. A foul scheme…that guy plotted this…I just got caught in it…I’m not in the wrong. I’m not wrong. This is because that guy stole everything important to me. The wrong one is that guy. If only that guy isn’t here then everything will go well. Yet, Kaori and Shizuku and Ryuutaro and Suzu too, everyone, to that guy…this is a betrayal. I was betrayed. I was-, betrayed! By all of you!”

Kouki ignored Shizuku and Ryuutaro’s calling and kept whispering before he suddenly lifted his face in the blink of eye with a dangerous look, glaring at the two with a gaze filled with hatred.

No, perhaps that expression, should be called as grief instead. The feeling of guilt and remorse, the uneasiness of being unable to return anymore, fretfulness, despair, and so on, the saturation of the negative emotions was attacking *himself*, even he himself already didn’t understand just what should he do, it was that kind of expression. Kouki was in a state of panic.

His appearance, was just like a lost child.

But, the strength that he possessed wasn’t that of a child by any means. A scream that was filled with plenty of Kouki’s hatred and grief resounded, at the same time his magic power that should have dried

up surged out with an unbelievable force. The magic power thunderously twisted in a spiral and pierced the sky.

That radiance, was as if…

“-, Kouki! Stop it! Your magic power should have dried up already! Doing more than this will affect your life!”

“Damn it! What the hell! Why his magic power is overflowing like this! Wasn’t it gone already-“

“It should have been gone! It was severed together with the line that supplied magic power to Kouki. Even now he isn’t absorbing the magic factor at the area to recover!”

“Then just why-!”

“Something likes that-, because it is gone then he can only take it from another thing! Perhaps, his life force or his soul, he is pulling out magic power forcefully from those kinds of things right now! Sooner or later this won’t end well for him!”

“Fucking shit! Koukii! Come back to your sensees!”

Yes, as if it was the radiance of Kouki’s life.

Shizuku had certainly used ‘Soul Demolition’ to sever the magic power and the supply line that provided him with infinite magic power inside Kouki. There was no doubt about that. And then, even with ‘High-Speed Magic Recovery’ that recovered oneself by absorbing magic factor from outside, it was impossible to recover this radically. Actually, even looking at the flow of magic power that Kouki spouted out, they couldn’t catch sight of any magic from the surrounding flowing into Kouki at all.

That there was the magic power that shouldn’t be there, meant that Kouki was paying some kind of compensation to forcefully bring it from somewhere, such thinking was a valid one. And then, this method that normally was impossible couldn’t be expected to be safe or anything. If Kouki was left alone as it was, undoubtedly there would be compensation that Kouki couldn’t shut his eyes from.

In front of the storm of magic power that released outrageous light and pressure, Shizuku and Ryuutaro braced themselves, they held their arms in front of their face while calling at Kouki. But, Kouki kept being in a frenzied state, his ear didn’t listen. With hatred and grief in his expression, it was as though he was trying to destroy the reality before his eyes, no, it was as though he was trying to destroy himself, the radiance of his light was strengthening.

“…Anything and everything are over. I wonder, why has it become like this. Kaori is there, Shizuku is there, Ryuutaro is there, Eri and Suzu are also there, together with everyone, we are overcoming the difficulty…that’s how it should be, and yet”

Kouki’s monolog with an expression of crying smile, was resounding extremely clearly.

“Something like this is not what I wished for. If everything, is lost then…if not a single one cannot be taken back then…then I’d rather everything is gone, with this hand!”

The ground and building in the area that were hit by the torrent of magic power became dust and got annihilated. Right now, the radiance of magic power became the radiance of Heaven Might. At the same time, that raging light was gradually focusing and forming shape.

"…Oi, Shizuku. I'll take care of the Heaven Might. I'll leave Kouki to you."

"Are you sane? That Heaven Might is far more dangerous than before you know? You won't be able to absorb it even in trent model. …You are going to die there."

The words that Ryuutaro murmured while enduring the tyranny of light with a grim expression, made Shizuku frowned even more. But, in contrast Ryuutaro was making a fearless smile on his lips.

"Heh, I'm not gonna die here. No way I'm gonna get killed by that guy's hand. I cannot die here no matter what, that's why I'm absolutely not gonna die!"

"You muscle brain. There is no logic or anything in what you said just now. …But, fine then. Right now is not the time where logic is needed. Beat up that sulky desperate idiot until he is crying and apologizing okay!"

"Ou-!"

Ryuutaro leaped forward. With a fierce smile, he clenched his fist hardly like a rock filled with the resolve of bringing back his best friend without fail.

Right after that, along with a scream, a torrent of light——the bombardment of Heaven Might spiraled out from the thrust forward holy sword and violently assaulted the two.

But, Ryuutaro didn't falter. Rather "BRING IT OOON!" he raised a war cry and met the attack from the front. He crossed both his arms and stepped forward while fully displaying the trait of the large tree monster.

Along with a tremendous impact sound, the bombardment of Heaven Might directly hit Ryuutaro. But, Ryuutaro wasn't annihilated. He wasn't blown away. Like a rock that blocked a raging stream and changed the water flow, like a towering large tree that didn't even twitch against a furious storm, he kept blocking the light of devastation right from the front and advanced a step, and then one more step forward.

Looking at that unshakeable figure, Kouki's eyes opened wide. He was convinced that the Heaven Might that he unleashed right now had the greatest power compared to everything until now. Yet despite so, Ryuutaro blocked it from the front. As though to say, that he wouldn't run away from Kouki, as though to say that he wouldn't avert his eyes.

The reddish black glint of eyes of his transformed best friend that pierced him straight from between the torrent of light, made Kouki's leg backed off unconsciously. Those eyes were telling him "I'm absolutely, going right there. I'm not gonna let you run away no matter what!" more eloquently than anything.

Like that, Kouki who was half dazed from that intense will of his best friend came back to his senses with a 'hah'. When he noticed, he had been approached until there wasn't that much distance remaining between them.

“Do, don’t come! Don’t come here! If you, come closer than that, I’m going to kill you for real! Even if it’s Ryuutaro, I’m really going to kill you!”

Kouki yelled with an expression that was going to break in tears anytime in derangement. Seeing the figure of Ryuutaro who had approached near him until the distance where he could even see his face, Kouki’s heart became even more disturbed.

Yes, Ryuutaro was already wounded all over his body. No matter how great the trait of light-absorbing the trent model had, there was this thing called limit, in actuality, the light of destruction that couldn’t be dealt by the trent’s trait was making both his arms torn all over, everywhere in his body had blood spurting out.

But, nonetheless Ryuutaro was still smiling fearlessly. And then, he advanced, one more step.

“A, a, aaAAAAAAAAAH!”

Kouki screamed. Even himself already didn’t understand just what he was doing. He was merely repeating ‘it shouldn’t be like this’ in his heart while wielding his strength to deny the reality before his eyes.

The mass of Heaven Might that was completely formed was a giant that could even come out in legend. The giant of light held its large arm aloft, and clenched its fist. And then, light exploded with Kouki’s scream as the nourishment, like that the fist swung downward toward Ryuutaro below like a star.

DOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO-!!!

A thunderous sound resounded. The ground was bursting open with the place where Ryuutaro was at as the center, everything was swept away in a radial shape.

“A, aa…”

Kouki moaned. While being in a daze he was convinced in the corner of his mind. Right now, he had killed his best friend with his own hand. Kouki’s heart was creaking. His eyes lost focus, meaningless thought was running around in his head.

Like that, Kouki’s mind was almost breaking down, at that time,

“Yoo, best friend. What, a shitty pathetic face, you are making there.”

“Eh?”

The dust was blown away.

There Ryuutaro was standing. He was alive. Not only that, while grinning fiercely, he was stopping the crushing blow of the giant with both his arms lifted up. His body that was like a gnarled blackish brown tree had cracks running everywhere on it, blood was spurting out from all over his tattered body, yet the strength residing in those eyes wasn’t weakening even for a bit.

“Ryu, Ryuutaro? Su, such thing, why, this should be impossible to bloc…”

“Stupid…idiot. A fist, like this…without any spirit in it…is not gonna work on me. …Hey, Kouki. You…just cannot kill me. Do you…understand why huh?”

“U, e?”

“See. That’s because, the current me…is invincible. Since the time I decided-, that I’m gonna bring back my stupid idiot best friend-…I am invincible-. That’s why-, you…won’t be able to kill me-. Until I bring you back-…I’m absolutely…not gonna get killed or anything—“

“u, a…wh, why are you, going that far…”

The heroic words and figure of his best friend caused Kouki’s voice to be caught up in his throat.

Facing such Kouki, Ryuutaro smiled broadly with wounds all over his body and formed his words.

“Something like that, is obvious, right? If your friend went the wrong path…punching, and stopping him…is a best friend’s…role ain’t it.”

“Because, a best, friend…”

“Ou. …But, well, for this time, that role, I’ll leave it to her. It’s pathetic but, my fist…doesn’t look like…it will reach.”

“Eh?”

Hearing Ryuutaro’s words, Kouki was taken aback for a moment. Ahead of his gaze, under the giant’s crushing blow that Ryuutaro blocked, a black shadow was rushing through. With her trademark ponytail fluttering, and a dignified gaze that was looking straight at him, it was the girl who was his childhood friend.

“——’Soul Demolition’!”

“——!?”

The invisible slash cut apart the magic power inside Kouki once more.

The giant of Heaven Might split into two and the upper part slipped off diagonally while dispersing. Underneath it, Ryuutaro collapsed with all his strength used up. Before Kouki’s eyes were a figure standing still in a stance of drawn blade staring at him with a gaze that looked likes obsidian stone. While all of those were reflected in his sight, Kouki was falling backward from the slash’s impact.

And then, Kouki who saw how the intent to attack didn’t disappear from Shizuku’s gaze even after she swung her black katana, “Aa, so this is my retribution…” with a strangely calm feeling he prepared to accept the blade of his childhood friend.

But, there a voice resounded. A familiar dignified voice.

“Grit your teeth-! You big idiot-!”

“-!? Guah!?”

Dogo-! With a dull loud sound, a severe impact was transmitted on Kouki’s cheek. The force that echoed until the core of his head blown away his consciousness for a moment. His sight that immediately returned after that was also flickering black and white. Strength naturally left his arms and legs from a cerebral concussion.

The sky was visible in his distorted sight. Kouki was vaguely understanding that he had fallen down.

Right after that, the following impact came from his opposite cheek. His head was snapped with a force that might tear off his neck. Just when he thought that, the next moment his head was snapped to the other side again along with an impact. And then further impact, impact, impact…Kouki's head was blurring left and right in high speed like a broken toys.

"This one is for all the trouble you caused for me! This one is for all the troublesome things you pushed on me! This one is for wasting the follow-up I did for you! This one is for not seriously listening to my scolding! This one is for various other things but anyway this if for me! This one is also for this and for that and for there and also for me!"

"Buh! Beh! Boh! Bah! Goh! Hih! Gih! Gee! Oboh! Abeshih! Buberah!?"

'ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA ORA-!!' With a force that made anyone looking at this scene would feel like hearing that, Shizuku was earnestly talking about her share of retribution while doing not a double slap but already double punch on Kouki's face. The white object glittering in the air was surely Kouki's tooth.

"Shi, Shizu-, wa-——"

"I won't wait I won't stop punching until you are crying and apologizing! My store of patience already has run out completely here, no more playing around! How long you are going to throw tantrum! Because everything is not going how you want it you get sulky and want to break everything! You pushed that tantrum to your surrounding! This shitty brat-. I'm not going to listen to whatever you say anymore! I'll teach this idiot that cannot be talked with using a beating! Prepare yourself!"

Shizuku's angry yell echoed in the war site of the ruined city. She was straddling Kouki who was lying down facing up and mercilessly punching repeatedly with her left and right fists.

"Shi, Shizu-, gahah"

"It shouldn't be like this? That's obvious! There is nobody who is living with everything going their way! Everyone, they gritted their teeth, held their head, they will say 'even so-' and then they did their best still! Running away from the reality in front your eyes, without even trying to fight, there is no way you can obtain the future you wished for like that! You, in the end, you are just a spoiled brat-. You averted your eyes from anything inconvenient, you are only wracking your head for excuses, and if that's still not enough then you will think that's because of other people's fault…"

Before he knew it, the fists of Shizuku lost their momentum, in exchange they grasped up the collar of Kouki strongly.

"Anything and everything is over you said? Don't screw with me-. If you think you can just end it all by yourself then that's a big mistake. You think I'm going to let you die easily like that-. If you are not going to understand no matter how many times I said it, then I'll make you understand forcibly. Even if I have to tie your neck with a rope, I'll drag you back. After that, every time you do stupid thing I'll beat you up!"

"Shizu, ku…"

‘If you still feel like making impertinent talk then I’m going to hit you until you cannot talk’, the eyes that were glinting right before he were telling him that. Blood was already leaking from Kouki’s mouth and nose, his face bloated up looking like a goblin, Kouki who was turned into such a horrible state opened his mouth with a voice that sounded like a groan.

“Di, didn’t you, choose Nagumo…”

“That’s right. The one who I like is Hajime. It’s not you. So what?”

“…Why…aren’t you giving up…on someone like me…even though I did horrible things…why…”

Even though she should have chosen Hajime, even though he had troubled a lot of people, even though he had done horrible thing to his important best friend and childhood friend, yet why didn’t they abandon him, to Kouki who stared at her unable to hide that bafflement, expression of rage finally vanished from Shizuku’s face and a troubled smile appeared.

“Isn’t that obvious. Because you are my childhood friend. We have been together all this time since childhood, for me you are the same as an important family, that’s why. Family, absolutely will not forsake family. Well, though I want to be spared from having a bothersome little brother like this.”

She couldn’t abandon him because he was like an important family. No matter what stupidity he perpetrated, he wasn’t abandoned, that was why they were family. Like that, inside Kouki who was told that along with a smile, something fell with a thump.

For the sake of the world, for the sake of the people whose face he didn’t know, because he was a hero, because he had to be righteous, all the things that he was fixated with until now suddenly looked small.

Only, because they were family, because they were best friend, they said that and they acquired strength incomparable from before, they came pursuing him until a dangerous place like this Holy Precincts despite him being the betrayer, even though they might die they just laughed and stopped him from running wild.

…Even though those should be an insignificant reason, just why they felt so big to him. Why, did they felt so powerful.

Tears were falling from Kouki’s eyes in large drops. His pathetic self that he finally became aware of from the bottom of his heart, and the childhood friends who still reached out their hand staking their life until the end even for someone the worst like that, caused an emotion that was indescribable and soppy, yet by no means it felt unpleasant welling up inside himself.

“So, rry. …Really, I’m sorry…I, something like this…aa, I, what have I…”

“You are crying while apologizing huh. This big idiot.”

After an indescribable feeling toward his childhood friends, a tremendous feeling of guilt and remorse welled up next. For Kouki who was fixated with the right thing until now, what he had done was the lowest and the worst deed. To the degree that he thought that he should repent for that with death.

But, that thinking was something that would make the act of his childhood friends who staked their life into something worthless, and then, in the end that thought was,

“Don’t you run, Kouki. Live, fight. We won’t forgive any path other than that.”

Death was just an escape. Even if it was hard, even if he lost his place to belong, even if he was cursed and disparaged by anyone, he had to keep living. That was exactly his atonement, a fight that Kouki had to do. In place of all his wretched escape until now, he had to continue to live and fight from now on.

Kouki cried while biting his lip at the straight gaze of his childhood friend. As though the feeling of his childhood friends was carved in his soul. As though he was determined to part with the him before this.

“…Shizu, ku. I…must not die. I’ll live, this time for sure, I have to fight. Not against anybody else, but against myself.”

“Yes, that’s right. That’s why, cry now, after that stand-up and do your best. If you are mistaken, then I’ll beat you up until you cry once more.”

Listening to what Shizuku said, Kouki showed a complicated expression that seemed vexed and pathetic, but also a bit happy where he couldn’t say anything. And then, he directed red eyes at Shizuku who let go of his collar and moved aside from above him. Those eyes had clear color as though evil spirit had left him.

“…There is, no need for that. Because, I’ll change. I swear I’ll change. To the degree that a childhood friend the same age as me cannot treat me like a ‘little brother’.”

“Is that so? Well, even if you become like that, I won’t treat you as a man you know?”

“Uu-, don’t put up defensive perimeter like that. …Is that how much you like Nagumo?”

“Yes, I love him. I am deeply in love with him. It’s vexing that I cannot monopolize him, but I’ll even share him peacefully. About the hardships of that side, if it’s him then he will easily shoulder it.”

“Don’t speak fondly of another man in front of your beaten up little brother like that…”

Kouki smiled wryly. There were plenty of frustration filled in that gaze, but he didn’t look disturbed from jealousy. Because in his heart he had an understanding. Just what attracted Shizuku to Hajime. That something was exactly the difference between him and Hajime, possibly even the difference between him with Shizuku and Ryuutaro, it was the reason for his defeat, he finally understood that.

“…You two, are you two forgetting me?”

While Kouki was feeling frustration and self-reproach of his childishness until now and resolved to change for his atonement, Ryuutaro had crawled and approached their spot before letting out a voice of displeasure.

“My, Ryuutaro. You really can move even with that tattered state aren’t you?”

“Because I already drank Nagumo’s Yunke– special recovery drink just now. I barely can move.” (TN: Yunkeru Royal C, a drink in Japan.)

Kouki directed his gaze at Ryuutaro who was answering while waving around a test tube container. He looked straight at his best friend who was wounded all over because of his fault, at the man who continued to call him ‘best friend’ through and through.

“Ryuutaro…I’m sorry.”

He mustn’t lower his head. If he lowered his head, he would take off his gaze from Ryuutaro. Because he had decided, that he wouldn’t avert his eyes from any truth, any reality, for the second time.

Ryuutaro who received that gaze of Kouki returned a calm gaze after a little pause. And then a beat later, he smiled broadly and only said a word,

“Ou.”

As though to say that excessive word was unneeded, he replied with just that. The answer that was just like Ryuutaro made Kouki smiled a bit. Between the two of them, just that word was enough.

But, at that time, a voice suddenly resounded.

“What, is this…”

Shizuku came back to her senses with a ‘hah’ and quickly turned aside with the black katana in hand. Ryuutaro also tried to ready himself somehow, but his damage was too deep, on top of that his ‘Sixth Heaven’s Demon Transformation’ was also already released, so he couldn’t stand up.

And then, Kouki who was in the same state that couldn’t stand up called the name of that voice’s owner.

“Eri…”

With wounds all over her body, Eri was floating in the air with her flickering gray wings flapping. She was staring at Kouki and others in a daze.

Suzu also came in pursuit from behind. Shizuku averted her gaze from Eri for an instant and met Suzu’s eyes. They were happy for each other that they were all safe, and then, the next moment they stared at Eri with an expression that was pregnant with tension.

Eri didn’t even notice Suzu, she was letting out a cracked voice.

“Heey, why, is the atmosphere is warm like this? Heey, Kouki-kun. These guys are the enemy you know? They followed the hateful, hateful enemy that stole every single one of Kouki-kun’s important things, they are betrayers you know? Why are you talking with them peacefully I wonder? Why I wonder? Heey, why?”

While tilting her head bobbingly like a broken toy, Eri talked with an empty gaze and unfocused eyes. Her four limbs were smashed and twisted into the wrong direction, so she looked like a marionette that was created with bad craftsmanship.

“Eri…I’m sorry. I already, cannot fight against Shizuku, or Ryuutaro, or Suzu. All this time I have been mistaking the enemy that I should fight.”

“…What’s with that?”

Eri’s head tilted to the side and stayed still unmoving. The angle of her head made them hallucinated that the bone of her neck had broke. Eri gazed at empty air and opened her mouth with madness riding her voice.

“What’s with that? What’s with that? What’s with that?

Its destructive power was unfathomable. And then, the activation speed was also incomparable with the original ‘Last Loyalty’.

Shizuku’s words were cut off. Because an explosion that erased even the sound trampled the area along with the light.

The torrent of light dyed everything white. A silence that made anyone hallucinated whether the world had vanished was violating everyone.

Shizuku, Kouki, Ryuutaro, they all immediately covered their face with their hands. And then, by lifting their hands like that, they noticed that they were able to recognize that the world was dyed with white and silence. At the same time, they saw a shadow that stretched long toward them.

That was the shadow of the protector they could rely on. The barrier master who had protected her comrades many times over until now. The girl was standing in the way of the torrent of light without taking even a step back, two iron fans readied like a shield. There was also the shadow of Inaba clinging to that back as though supporting her.

No voice could reach. But, Shizuku, Kouki, and also Ryuutaro prayed wholeheartedly. Because they could do nothing else except that, they prayed that at least their pray would reach, becoming her strength.

Suzu felt like nodding a little.

Before long, even her figure was buried in light and became not visible.

Suzu was in a mysterious space.

Right after she nodded feeling as though she was hearing the voice of Shizuku and others, when she noticed she was already in this white space. There was no light or impact in this really deep space.

In such mysterious place, there was only one person other than Suzu.

“Eri…”

“…Suzu.”

The two of them faced each other with a certain distance between them. They stared at each other for a while wordlessly. The one who opened her mouth first was Eri.

“What a strange place. Is this a revolving lantern one see before death…a bit different I guess. Or a near death experience…I died already though so I guess that’s really not it.”

“Then, Suzu has died too perhaps. Suzu thought Suzu managed to defend to the end however.”

“Who knows? If possible I want to take you all along with me though.”

“Suzu want to live. Suzu also wants Shizuku, and Kouki-kun too, also Ryuutaro-kun to live too…Suzu also wants Eri to live.”

Suzu's words made Eri snorted as if she making fun of her.

"Hmph. After sending me flying mercilessly like that, you can still say that so shamelessly."

"Ahaha. Yeah."

Eri became plainly displeased looking at Suzu who was smiling wryly. And then, without even hiding that displeasure she further opened her mouth.

"I somehow feel that we won't be in this world for long, that's why I'll say this right now. Suzu is seriously gross."

"…Hee. For example?"

"Let's see. Like when you always laughed foolishly. Or even when you were talked behind your back, you still laughed as expected. Or how your inside is a perverted old man. How you said disgusting thing like wanting to become a friend even when in the middle of killing each other. It won't end if I keep showing other examples, but the grossest thing is, how even when you are already in this age, you are still calling yourself with your own name. No, really, you are impossible aren't youu"

Suzu's forehead was twitching with her vein visibly rising to the surface. And then, still smiling she counterattacked.

"Suzu seeee. But, Eri is also mostly disgusting aren't you?"

"Haa?"

"You always had a friendly smile while standing behind. Even when you were talked behind your back you only smiled as expected. Your inside is just someone dour. You wear glasses and act reserved like a library committee member, you tried too hard fitting in with that cliché. Also, Suzu doesn't want you saying anything about how Suzu called herself. Just what with your 'boku'. Seeing a glasses girl getting too worked up calling herself 'boku' like a library committee member is just painful. Furthermore, [I am the heroine] you said. Pupu-, you need to graduate from being a chuuni." (TN: Chuunibyou=Sickness of the youth where they kept mass producing black history. They were convinced that they were a character of fantasy story.)

Eri's forehead was twitching with her vein visibly rising to the surface. And then, still smiling she counterattacked.

"Chuuni? I don't want to be called that by a painful girl who said something like [Onee-samaa] in real world seeee. Geez Suzu, you have an inclination for yuri aren't you. I have felt the danger to my body several times before. What an impossible pervert. Really gross."

"Ahaha, something like that is still in the range of joking, right? I don't want to be treated as a pervert by a misunderstanding female who got hung on her first love and rushed full speed to the hill seee. Seeing that is really impossibly painful you know. Really gross."

"…"

"…"

“ “*AAaa*?” “

Both of them were slinging violence of words at each other with a thuggish expression that didn’t look like high school girl beauty. After that for a little while abusive language that would make anyone wanted to cover their eyes flew back and forth between the two.

Like that, perhaps unable to continue to breath the two of them were going “Haa haa” with their shoulders heaving, around that time the white space suddenly began to crack.

“Hmph, looks like this world is finally ending.”

“…”

Suzu couldn’t reply to Eri who was making a refreshed expression. With her hands on her knees she was facing down while hiding her face. But, she couldn’t hide the things that trickled down on the ground.

“…What, you are crying? Stupid.”

“Sh, shut up, already. The one who said, idiot, is the idiotic one…”

Suzu held back her sobbing while roughly wiping the overflowing drops. Guessing that the true parting was approaching, she was unable to hold down the something that was welling up in her heart.

“…I said something like that just now but, perhaps, Suzu and others haven’t died yet. The one who is going is me(boku)…just me(watashi).” (TN: Eri suddenly changed the way she called herself there.)

“E, ri?”

The way she called herself that suddenly changed, no, returned to normal made Suzu lifted her still crying face. Ahead of her gaze, Eri who was still averting her face was making an expression that was deliberately displeased.

“Suzu also understand somehow right? Despite so why are you crying like that.”

“That, is”

“…Really what an idiot. Just what are you feeling regretful for, for this kind of betrayer, this worst woman trash.”

The white world was noticeably dispersing from the edge.

“At this late you were saying ‘want to be together’ or ‘protect’, I thought whether you were actually aiming for that.”

“Eri, Suzu is…”

“Come on, that’s disgusting so change the way you call yourself.”

“Uu, Eri…”

A collapse separated the two. Almost everything had been mostly dispersed other than the foothold of the two. Amidst that, Eri’s words that sounded like a monolog resounded.

“…At that time, if the one that I met on that bridge was Suzu…what would happen I wonder? For me to think of sooomething like that, yep, I’m the biggest idiot.”

“Eri, Suzu is——I, am glad to be Eri’s best friend! Even if that was faked, even if it was distorted, it was fun! I-“

The foothold dispersed. The body of the two was also turning into sand and vanished as though blown away by the wind.

Eri who was facing aside turned her face toward the yelling Suzu. Her expression looked expressionless, but somewhere it also seemed to be filled with a relieved atmosphere.

And then, the true last words of the girl named Nakamura Eri reached only the girl named Taniguchi Suzu who was once her best friend, who by some chance, might even still her best friend even now.

“…Bye bye. The time when I was with Suzu, I felt at ease, just for a little.”

“__”

Suzu’s yell was swallowed by the vanishing world and didn’t become sound.

Even so, from the expression that Eri showed Suzu in the last moment, she believed, that surely she had reached her.

drip, drip Such feeling caressed her cheeks.

Other than what was behind Suzu, everything was turned into dust in this ruined city. There a sobbing reverberated.

The twin iron fans that Suzu held with both her hands crumbled in pieces as though to say they had finished their role and fell on the ground. Suzu herself also sat down on the ground with a body full of wounds, but Shizuku and others who were completely protected behind her didn’t call at her worriedly.

Shizuku and others didn’t know about the mysterious phenomenon that Suzu experienced. Even so, they were able to guess that the tears that Suzu let out were her feeling for her important friend. That was how pained and how sacred her figure looked.

Before long, as though to say that she had cried enough, Suzu wiped her eyes briskly, and then with those bright red and clear eyes, she clenched her body and stood up. And then, she turned toward Shizuku and others with an energetic turn.

“Now, Shizuku, Kouki-kun, Ryuutaro-kun. Let’s advance ahead!”

An innocent smile. Just like how it usually was. That smile which protected her comrades in a different meaning than a barrier, right now it looked a bit like an adult. Compared to when they were in Japan, compared to when she cheered up everyone in the labyrinth, it looked far more charming.

The source of liveliness that was overwhelmingly effective made Shizuku and others to naturally slacken down their cheeks. Though it was only Kouki who was making a complicated expression.

Has something happened, he didn't ask that. Because surely that was something that was stored inside Suzu's heart inside even her treasure box. To forcefully ask her would be a boorish act.

"Yossha! Let's chase after those guys and help them with this and that!"

"Even if you said that, I and Ryuutaro cannot move properly though…"

"Besides, the clock tower was also destroyed you know? It doesn't look like there is other entrance that can connect the spaces."

Shizuku turned her gaze at the place where the clock tower was at. Over there, she couldn't find the ripple that connected the space.

"Aa, now that you mentioned it, the ruined city of this space is not only in this place, I heard that story before."

"Then, let's search for another city! The skyboards are quite ragged, but I think if we use every trick in the book then they can still be used for a while. We surely can find another city if it's from the sky!"

"I guess there is that. Anyway, Kouki and Ryuutaro, you two have to recover quickly. I'll make you two drink restorative medicines until your stomachs are bloating like a balloon."

Kouki and Ryuutaro looked at the recovery drinks lined up before their eyes with reluctant eyes, even so they poured them down their throat somehow and their body was healed with the combination of their own recovery strength.

Like that after resting for a while, they took out their skyboards and flew to the sky. Kouki was riding together with Ryuutaro on his skyboard.

Suzu who soared high to the sky in the lead twirled to turn behind and looked down on the ruined city below with a bit lonely expression. However, that too was only for an instant. She immediately made a strong and lively smile and raised her voice.

"Now, everyone, continue after *me*!"

"Geez, Suzu."

"Haha-, this is the Suzu that we know."

"We are no match for Suzu huh."

Like that Suzu, Shizuku, Ryuutaro, and Kouki, the four of them in order to chase after Hajime and others they searched for other ruined city and soared in the sky of another world.

Chapter 168 – The World of the Holy Precincts

"Just how many spaces there are here."

"Hmmm. It's fortunate that they enemies art not a big deal but…Goshujin-sama. How much further will it be until we reach Yue?"

When Shia who stayed still in a posture where she had just blown away an attacking monster to the beyond with Vire Doryukken murmured that, Tio who also similarly just blew away a monster to the beyond even with her magic power restrained using compressed and spiral movement to increase her breath attack's power turned to Hajime while asking that.

"Comparing it to the starting point at the first space…we have gone through around four-fifths of the distance. I guess it might be the next space or the space after that."

"So you say that it will be soon then!"

When Hajime answered that while activating the compass, a monster came attacking in that timing from behind. With a fierce step Shia stepped between the monster and Hajime and while sending the monster flying with a full swing, she made a happy expression. For the moment if a comparison was made, then the monster here was at the same level with the middle level of Orcus Great Labyrinth's abyss, but for Shia, they were not enough at all as an opponent. Hajime was also in a state where he wasn't bothered at all.

At the night before storming this place, Shia and also Tio continued to train inside the space where the time was stretched using Hour Crystal until the sky turned bright, so their strength had been raised from obtaining new power like utilizing the metamorphosis magic and so on. Although it also felt like a hasty preparation, they were in possession of enough cards that could become a trump card.

Although, that too was also thanks to Hajime's cheatmate, the outrageous food that was overflowing with fishiness, this item had quite a strong influence but…they could only pray that their stomach wouldn't get hurt. In here there was no toilet, so it would become something dreadful for the female camp if such thing came to pass.

Currently, Hajime and others were smack dab in a middle of the ocean. As far as the eye could see there was not a single island, it was a space of sea. Sometimes, sea monster leaped out from the sea and bird monster flew from the sky, but they were dealt with without any particular problem.

Although, it was a place without any landmark or anything, so if they didn't have the compass, just how much they would need to wander here…just imagining of being in that situation where they didn't have any time to waste made them shuddered.

Just as could be understood from Shia's words, Hajime and others had passed through several words until this point. After they parted from Shizuku and others and passed through the clock tower of the ruined city, they had traveled through a space where the ground and sky were reversed, a space where countless white blocks were floating, a space where there were only large mountains like God Mountain towering over, and a space that was like a giant library where countless bookshelves were cluttered together.

They were able to discover the exits to the next space at all those spaces without getting lost thanks to the compass, so not much time had passed since they parted with Shizuku and others. Even so, when they thought about Yue, they got impatient no matter what, so there was nothing more aggravating than all these countless spaces for Hajime and others.

They did nothing but advanced straight ahead for a few minutes in this space of large ocean with really good visibility that showed them nothing but water, to the degree they wanted to doubt whether there

really was an exit in this place. Thanks to their skyboard, Hajime and others covered a considerable distance in a short time, but they suddenly lifted their face.

“Dark cloud?”

Hajime whispered so while narrowing his eyes. His words weren’t really a figurative expression that pointed at the end of this journey. In actuality, the sky that was supposed to be clear was beginning to be covered by dark cloud rapidly like seeing a video that was fast forwarded. Furthermore, even the calm sea was beginning to be stormy due to the strong wind. It appeared that a large storm was suddenly generating.

The obviously strange situation made Hajime quietly narrowed his eyes, his gaze was turning below.

“…Looks like there is something big there.”

“Uwaa, this is also…this is the largest size we have seen from all the monsters we have encountered until now isn’t it desuu.”

“Yes, I can feel a strength that is in a different league with all the monsters we hath encountered until now.”

The expression of Shia and Tio who followed Hajime in looking below distorted unpleasantly.

Ahead of their gaze, a giant whirlpool began to form on the sea. It was obviously not something natural. The phenomenon wasn’t created by sea current. It was a whirlpool created by the side effect of a living thing’s movement.

Before they realized undulation was coiling to the degree that covered the whole sea below——there was a giant snake there.

Looking from the shadow projected on the water surface of the stormy sea, they could see that the whole length of it might be more than three hundred meters. The diameter of its body was so thick that it couldn’t be so easily measured by sight. The whole body was covered by metallic scales, on its back there were also fins attached that possessed hard shine, they glinted just like a blade.

And, at that time,

KISHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!!

A terrific roar thundered, space was rattling. That roar which was accompanied by physical impact struck Hajime and others violently, in addition, an unknown wave was transmitted to their mind. Probably this roar was accompanied with an effect that awakened terror in the listener’s mind.

Normally the one who heard this roar would have their body along with their mind blown away into darkness due to the shockwave, and even if they barely maintained their consciousness, their brain would be in disarray and their body cowering in fear, they would be turned into prey and could only tremble while waiting to be eaten.

However, amidst all the people that were here, not even a single one of them was someone cute like that.

“So noisy. Anyway eat this.”

Hajime took out Agni-Orkan with a gloomy expression and began an all out shooting. Furthermore, he casually took out from his ‘Treasure Warehouse II’ metallic spheres the size of a basketball——huge explosive and dropped them all into the sea.

A beat later. For an instant light flashed below the sea surface, then along with muted explosive sound countless water pillars burst up toward the sky.

GUOOOOOOOOOOH!!

The monster of sea raised a shriek. It wasn’t a scream. It was a roar of pure fury. It was enraged from the impertinence of the puny being’s attitude.

As though to display that fury, reddish black light surged from inside the water. That light which made anyone felt severe killing intent was a glint of eyes. While the roar of fury was still shaking the air, the sea surface swelled up like a mountain, and that figure appeared.

A head that looked like dragon leaped out from the sea surface with a long neck that was longer than fifty meters. As for the size, if one was told that each one of its scales was as large as a human child then its hugeness surely could be felt. There, there was a pair of eyes emitting reddish black light and the two layers of sharp fangs that lined up smoothly, and also something like fin at both sides. The fins were similar like the torso, they possessed metallic shine and sharpness of blade, it felt like just by touching it would cause the one touching to be bisected right into two.

An absurd pressure. Just by existing there, the sky was enveloped with a dark cloud, the sea was raging as though the end of the world was coming. The large snake, no, the sea dragon was coated in countless scales that looked harder than even steel, its appearance was just like the leviathan that was told in the legend of earth.

“If we hath to classify this then this must be a ‘Divine Beast’ doth it not.”

“Certainly, from here I can feel a pressure above that of the ‘Evil Eater’ we fought in Meljine Undersea Ruins. If this one is above even an ancient monster, then that’s a valid expression desu.”

Shia agreed with Tio’s opinion about this monster. But, even after calling the monster a ‘Divine Beast’, their expression was comparatively composed. There was also no color of tension that could really be heard from their voice. By the point of time they could converse calmly about the naming of the divine beast, it had shown how the pressure of this divine beast leviathan wasn’t something that worried them.

Perhaps such composure was transmitted to the divine beast, because the divine beast then roared once more. As though to say that it was impossible for his might to not affect these puny existences, the roar was even more powerful than the first one.

But, that roar made it a little too defenseless.

“I told you, you’re noisy.”

Hajime took out his improvised Shuragen.

No, what Hajime took out, whether in the aspect of form or spec, both aspects were already far excelling the territory of an ‘anti-material rifle’. The barrel that stretched straight for four meters long had extensive caliber more than the previous version, no matter how one looked at it this size should be called as gun turret instead. In total the whole weapon had become more than two sizes larger.

——Electromagnetic Acceleration Large Caliber Sniping Cannon(Rail Cannon) Shuragen AA(Acht Acht)

Are you looking for a lovely weapon of man’s romance? Very well, then it’s the 88mm! This rail cannon was something that resided in Hajime’s soul.

Hajime who fixed his aim by holding it under his arm made it so crimson spark was running through the rail cannon. Right after that, the large muzzle turned at the divine beast and the trigger was pulled without any hesitation. With acceleration incomparable with anything until now, the charged cannon that was specialized for piercing let out a fierce thunderous sound and blast while bullet flew out, the bullet had a trail of red flash behind and flew into the divine beast’s mouth.

And then, *DOPAN!* such sound came out while the scale on the back of the divine beast’s head was smashed and sent flying from inside, in addition, the bullet didn’t stop, it also blew away the cloudy sky above and vanished at the beyond of this another world.

GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!

The roar that was raised once more was obviously a scream. The beast’s head was thrown back from the impact and its mouth stayed opened with blood scattering everywhere.

While snorting at that, Hajime made something ran in the shadow. Its speed was too fast and because of the dark cloud the surrounding became dim and it was hard to see, the divine beast also just received damage and got agitated, so it missed that shadow and allowed the thing to infiltrated inside its mouth.

In order to vomit that out, and then also to vent its violent rage toward the one who granted it damage, the divine beast spewed out a terrific heat from its jaw.

Hajime kept silent and took out crossbit. Right after that, the four point barrier that the crossbit created was hit by the blaze, its surface was licked all over by the white hot flame. But, as long as it wasn’t the disintegration attack from an apostle, the barrier wouldn’t be broken that easily, the face of Hajime inside the barrier was unruffled.

The divine beast gazed in wonderment for a moment seeing its flame got stopped, although as though to show its pride as a divine beast it increased the force of the heat further, attempting to roast Hajime to death. Perhaps it should be said as expected from a divine beast, the heat of the blaze was absurd, the flame was something that one mustn’t touch at all cost and the sea surface began to evaporate and smoked up. There was also the effect of the blaze, but the dark cloud that was once blown away was rapidly beginning to come back.

But, right after that,

“Even though we have to hurry on ahead, read the mood already desuu!!”

A mass of faint blue pierced through the sea of black cloud and fell down like a meteor. Rabbit ears were flapping violently from the wind and got unruly. It was Shia.

Right after Hajime defended against the flame, Shia stored her skyboard into ‘Treasure Warehouse II’ and leaped in one go to the sky, she broke through even the dark cloud, danced in the clear blue sky, and turned around after that. Using ‘Air Force’ to continuously stepped on the air, she fell like a meteor aiming at the target.

A wall of air appeared with Shia as the center. Shia instantly shook free from that and plunged into the world of the speed of sound, her momentum didn’t decrease even for a bit and Vire Doryukken which had its weight increased until twenty tons using gravity stone were readied in overhead stance.

And then, the head of the divine beast that got absorbed in spewing out blaze from its large mouth was struck with a gruesome attack without even a drop of mercy or reservation.

A thunderous roar. The sound of pulverization. And then a shriek.

The divine beast whose mouth was forcefully closed had blaze spurting out in trickles from the gap of its mouth while its muffled shriek was also leaking out similarly from the gaps. The head that was covered by those metallic scales was pulverized like broken glass, reddish black meat became visible from there.

Shia’s attack was considerably effective. The divine beast showed a staggering motion that didn’t fit its status. Perhaps it even got a concussion.

But, there was no way these people would loosen their hand just from seeing that,

“I think it’s better using Goshujin-sama’s transmutation though.”

While whispering that kind of thing, Tio was hovering in the sky while flapping her wings, both her hands were joined into a shape like a jaw and black magic power was focused there. And then, she released that in one go. Dragon’s breath that was compressed in this way became a piercing attack.

The attack that was fired advanced in spiraling motion like a thin lance, it impacted the place Shia pulverized accurately and pierced the head of the divine beast.

The black spear went through the head and entered inside the mouth, without stopping it pierced to outside from inside the throat and the attack continued to pierce the sea.

A fatal wound. Everyone who saw that would surely think so, but it seemed that was still insufficient to kill a divine beast that was superior even compared to the ancient monster.

GUAAAAN!!

The divine beast didn’t die instantly, it raised a sound that was a little high-pitched and sea water crawled up its body. And then, when the place that was destroyed was covered by water, the water was swallowed into the wound. Right after that, the wound bulged and recovered like a rewound video.

“Uhee, by any chance, it can recover as long as it has sea water, something like that?”

“In that case, it will take time to kill it completely. It will be best if we art able to destroy its magic stone but…Goshujin-sama, how doth it goes regarding that?”

Tio landed beside Hajime while asking.

Hajime was looking at the divine beast with a strange glint in his eyes while shaking his head.

“No, I cannot find its magic stone. There is a chance I overlook it with how large its body is but…magic stone will grow large in the proportion of the monster’s size, with how much I’m looking but still cannot find it I guess it doesn’t have it from the start. Its whole body is dyed reddish black just like the Evil Eater.”

“Muu, how troublesome. I don’t feel we art going to lose at all, but I want to avoid wasting time…”

“What to do, Hajime-san?”

Ancient monster seemed to be the ancestor of monsters. Shia and Tio frowned from hearing that this monster was the same type with that ancient monster that they once fought.

But, in contrast Hajime only shrugged lightly.

“Facing a giant sea monster like this, the theory is to enter its body and attack from the inside right?”

“Ah, the thing just now…”

Shia raised her voice as though she was noticing something.

Right at that moment, the divine beast whose head was in the middle of recovering raised a scream as though to drown Shia’s voice.

aAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA-!!

It was unmistakably a shriek. Its whole body was writhing as though being in an intense agony.

Looking at that state, Tio also nodded in understanding while asking Hajime.

“By the way o Goshujin-sama. What art the meal course?”

“Broiled eel roasted by tar from the inside. The garnish dishes are explosive and deadly poison.”

“Oou…hearing that, I feel a little sympathy for it.”

Hajime’s quick answer made Tio sent a pitying gaze to the divine beast as though she was looking at a poor thing.

As for the divine beast in question, it was shrieking while writhing around fiercely without stopping.

That couldn’t be helped. After all, the crossbit that was sent inside its body opened a gate and poured down a large amount of tar and explosive inside, in addition it also scattered around the strongest poison that was the product of the abyss, where in the end, all of those were lit on fire all at once. Like that even its hard scales were irrelevant.

The divine beast began to drink sea water. Surely it was trying to fill its body with sea water in the attempt to heal. But, that was a bad move.

As though to proof that, right after the divine beast drunk sea water, a part of its torso burst up along with a grand explosion sound. Flame blast also jetted out from its mouth. A scream filled with bewilderment rose from the divine beast.

“Giving a lot of water to flame above three thousand Celsius…obviously a vapor explosion is going to happen. Ah, a beast won’t know anything like that huh.”

“That is, someone who had ever set flame inside the body of something like that must be only Hajime-san. This is absolutely its first experience with that desu.”

“How unpleasant, this first experience is. …No, rather is it not a lovely first experience instead?”

“Don’t get deeper and deeper into your fetish. It’s scary when I wonder if you are going to demand something that is incorrigible even for me in the future.”

Hajime’s expression became unpleasant from hearing Tio’s nonsense. And then, ignoring Tio who was going ‘ehe ehe’ shyly for some reason, his gaze returned at the divine beast.

The divine beast who somehow felt like it was giving off an air of despair from experiencing how the damage in his body got increased instead when it tried to recover. Even so, perhaps because of its dignity as a powerful monster, even while spouting out a lot of blood it was glaring at Hajime with eye glint boiling with killing intent.

Hajime who received that gaze…licked his lips for some reason.

The divine beast twitched.

Hajime murmured to himself while floating a fierce smile to that divine beast.

“I want to eat…”

“ “Eh?” “

Even though it was a small whisper, regardless of the stormy wind and the raging sea, for some reason those words resounded clearly, it caused Shia and Tio to whip their head quickly at Hajime.

The divine beast too, even though it was supposed to writhe in agony, its movement stopped still and its gaze was fixed at Hajime.

Hajime was directing his eyes that were strangely sparkling since some time ago at the divine beast, while whispering further.

“Its flesh is nicely filled to the brim with strength. If it’s this beast, than it surely can become even my nourishment.”

And then, he licked his lips one more time.

With that finally even the divine beast noticed.

The enemy before its eyes, the fiercely glaring gaze this enemy directed at itself wasn’t something easy to understand like hostility or killing intent…it was an appetite for food.

With a shudder, a chill that the beast had never felt since it was born ran through its whole body. Unaware, the divine beast was ‘drawing away’ unbecomingly. The gaze that was by no means had never been directed to it who was an existence that stood at the top of food chain——that gaze from the predator caused an indescribable terror to invade its body.

This person wouldn't be able to do it——the monster didn't think of anything like that. At present, the one who was cornered like this was itself. The divine beast was convinced. If it kept fighting on, itself would be definitely…eaten.

The moment it understood that, the divine beast turned aside adroitly with an agility that surprised even itself. The heat inside its body that was burning it up, or the pain of the invading poison, or the impact of the explosion when sea water touched the burning in its body, it ignored all of those and poured all its strength just to escape earnestly.

The divine beast that attempted to escape with a resoluteness that should be nonexistent for the strongest level of monster made even Hajime to get taken aback for a moment. That was just how splendid the escape was. As though *pyu~* such sound effect was accompanying its escape.

"-, bastaard. Wait, meaat! How can you run away despite being a divine beast huh!"

PIGYAAA———!!

When Hajime used the crossbit inside the divine beast in panic to try to stop it in its track, the divine beast raised a roar that sounded a little pathetic, that long body deflated just for a moment, and then it vomited a large amount of sea water that made one wanted to ask just from where it took all of that from.

Naturally, explosions occurred grandly, parts of here and there of its body were blown up, yet it somehow managed to vomit out the crossbit. And then, it manipulated the sea water to make several tornados on the sea, it directed them to Hajime while diving into the bottom of the sea at full speed.

"Let, me, eat, the, meat, of you, bastaaard~"

While blowing away the tornados that were approaching from all directions using impact conversion of magic power, Hajime demanded for the divine beast's meat with a voice that resembled a deeply held grudge.

The divine beast that looked back just for an instant from under the sea surface met the bloodshot gaze of the tiny being demanding its meat, while harboring a tremendous terror to that, it averted its gaze in panic as though to say "I've seen what must not be seen".

And then,

PIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII~~~~!!

While a crying voice that had surpassed being pathetic and instead invited pity was resounding in the air, its figure vanished into the darkness of the deep sea. It felt like they could hear something that somehow sounded like "I won't come out from home anymoreee~", but surely it was just their feeling though.

"Son of a bitch! It should be impossible for a monster of that level to immediately decide to escape! Even though it's a chance to power up at this last minute!"

Perhaps because the divine beast had disappeared, the dark cloud was dispersing and the stormy sea was recovering its calm once more, amidst all that Hajime stamped his feet in frustration.

There, Shia and Tio were approaching with an exasperated gaze.

“For Goshujin-sama, even a divine beast is already nothing but predation target.”

“Until now surely it had never been looked at with that kind of gaze, that’s why it has no endurance isn’t it. Its last cry, it sounded a little pitiful. Perhaps this will even become a trauma for it that turns it into a shut-in after this.”

“Chih, that snake got no guts.”

There was no doubt that surely not even in a dream that a divine beast of all things could have its bravery to be questioned.

Hajime stored the returning crossbit in a bad mood and took out his compass once more to decide the route.

Then, right at that timing, ahead of Hajime and others’ gaze, the space a few kilometers separated from them began to shake like jelly. And then, after a few moments the space melted and disappeared and a large island appeared from the space gap.

“…It seemed, there is an entrance to the next space at the center of that island.”

“Does it appear because the divine beast withdrew?”

“That possibility art high. No one would even imagine that it would withdraw in that way though.”

Shia and Tio sent a gaze of pity at the spot where the traumatized divine beast vanished, and then they followed Hajime’s lead and departed from that spot.

It appeared that the island had quite the size. The island was covered with really tall trees that could reach a few dozen meters in the whole, other than the shoreline they couldn’t see the ground at all. The entrance to the next space seemed to be at the center of that forest.

And then, Shia’s rabbit ears sensed that powerful monsters were running rampant in large number there, especially at the center part.

The monsters weren’t at the level of the divine beast, but every single one of them was a powerful monster. They wouldn’t lose against the monsters, but the monsters’ number was a lot so it felt like it would take quiet the time to fight the monsters just like against the divine beast.

Shia asked Hajime “What to do?” with her gaze.

Hajime took out ‘Shuragen AA’ from ‘Treasure Warehouse II’ once again and took a kneeling posture on his skyboard and entered a sniping stance. Using heat detection, the scope penetrated the trees and projected only the image of living things.

“Aa, don’t tell me Hajime-san is…”

“Wait a bit. I’ll take care of this right away. This is a lightning speed accurate bombardment from outside their detection. Surely they won’t be able to react. I’ll blow away the head of things that looks troublesome.”

Shia took the confirmation from Hajime with a cramped face, and then crimson flash rushed through the sky instantly.

That streak of flash wasn't noticed at all by a giant gorilla that looked like a giant kong walking heavily deep inside the forest, its head got blown away instantly, and its brain matter was scattered everywhere. Next the bullet impacted the ground and a large crater was created with the trees on the area got blown away.

Furthermore, thunderous sounds reverberated in succession. From a far distance of more than ten kilometers, the lights of death that flew at a speed that was impossible to detect dispersed one after another the heads of the giant monsters loitering around the area that seemed to be the space entrance. The thick forest was instantly turned into a battlefield site that was littered with holes.

"Surely, after defeating the divine beast, next powerful monsters would go ROAR! in a great swarm and the intruder would go Kyaa, what a disaster! Originally this must be for something like that isn't it."

"Well, this art not a labyrinth so this art not even a trial…though there art no doubt that this art intended to be obstacles perchance."

While half laughing Shia and Tio remembered the time until now, where Hajime easily removed the obstacles using methods other than frontal attack, that was why the two of them hadn't made any significant contributions yet.

Both of them exchanged gazes filled to the brim with sympathy to each other from how their expectation of rampaging with their all in order to take back Yue was betrayed.

But, that ardor would be demonstrated just before they reached Yue's location.

After massacring the island's monsters one-sidedly, Hajime and others transferred to the next space from the stone statue at the center of the forest and leaped out into a world of sky where several gigantic islands were floating.

There were islands with a diameter of only a few dozen meters, but there were also islands with a scale of a few kilometers. River water was continuing to flow down from the edge of the floating islands without end with some kind of mysterious logic. Because of the height, the water became mist after some distance of falling as waterfall, the scenery of white mist drifting at the surrounding was very fantastical.

Above all the floating islands were overflowing with greenery, there were plains and also forests. There was not a single floating island that was merely a floating rock.

Sea of clouds was spreading below. The clouds lingered at the height of their gaze, drifting on the sky like cotton candy. Even now it felt like the clouds were giving off a sweet aroma.

Even though there was no sun, but brilliant light was pouring down, light pillar weaved through the gaps of the clouds——several of what was commonly called as 'ladder of angel' could be seen.

There were white clouds overflowing with great numbers of floating islands, and then there were also beams of light pouring down.

It was truly a solemnly mystical scenery. If someone who didn't know anything was told that this place was heaven then they would unconditionally believe it.

After their gazes were stolen just for a little while by that scene, Hajime and others shook their head and advanced forward. Their objective was the floating island that looked conspicuously large even among all the many floating islands. The compass was pointing at there.

They flew their skyboard and closed the distance in the blink of eye. At the same time, they caught strong presence at that floating island.

Before Hajime and others who narrowed their eyes in vigilance, that guy appeared.

"As expected you came. Nagumo Hajime. The fool who defy god."

With silver wings and hair that looked like an apostle rustling from the wind, the monster user devil race——Freed Bagua was there.

Chapter 169 – White Divine Dragon and the Platinum Apostle

On the gigantic island with diameter around ten-odd kilometer.

There were grass plain and forest, with branching small rivers in between, where the upper stream was linked toward the mountain with bountiful greenery.

A chalk white obelisk was enshrined at the grass plain area of that floating island. The huge tower that was around fifty meters tall looked out of place in the middle of the magnificent nature. Coupled with that artificial whiteness, it looked strangely conspicuous.

But, something even more standing out existed further above that obelisk, it was a silver colored man sitting cross-legged on a shining magic circle. His silver hair and wings fluttered in the wind. His skin was so white that it looked transparent, even the color of his eye pupils looked shining radiantly silver.

His clothing looked like a pure white priest outfit. Coupled with his calm and self-possessed state, his appearance gave a divine impression. If anyone who didn't know anything saw him, they would surely think that a messenger from heaven had descended.

The first voice that man, Freed Bagua let out made Hajime who was facing him to snort while he started talking frivolously.

"Is that new fashion? If that's the case then there is nothing I can say except you have got no fashion sense at all. It's because you are still accepting the clothes that your parent(god) prepared for you without protesting that you looked incredulous like that. Your red hair and darkish skin before this looked manlier you know?"

Hearing Hajime's speech, Tio and Shia burst into a snort "bufuh" beside him. Perhaps the two of them also had such experience, that the clothing that parents prepared for their children was usually embarrassing. Just what kind of clothing that Karm and Adol presented to their daughter, and then, the complicated expression that Shia and Tio surely made at that time…it was something that made Hajime felt relatively curious.

Although, Freed who was obviously got made fun of only reacted slightly with a twitch of his eyebrow from that speech, his calm behavior still didn't break. And then, as though to say that he got no intention to follow along with Hajime's frivolous talk, he talked with a cold voice.

"…Indeed, you really are still alive. When Aruvheit-sama didn't come back, and my lord informed me that you are going to come, I thought what kind of a joke is that yet…truly what an obstinate man you are. It would be better if you just graciously die."

"Hee, so that shitty bastard Ehito predicted this. Well, I guess he at least has that much brain. He understands just how great my feeling toward Yue is after all. So? What about you? Were you told to defeat us here? Getting ordered to come to your suicide here, what a cruel order that is. So that's why your hair got totally white like that then, because of the stress huh."

Once more, snorting sounds "buhoh" could be heard from Hajime's both sides.

Freed ignored the sympathetic gaze that said "Freed-kun, you really got it hard" which was directed at him and continued on talking.

"No matter the time you are still screwing around. Really, you don't seem like a man whose woman is taken away at all."

"Yue is the best woman there is after all. It can't be helped that she is popular. I only need to straighten up all the guys who laid her hand on her. Even the master you are proud of, I'll carve a lot of agonies and regret into him before killing him."

"That haughtiness, it will be immediately broken apart. My lord has already grasped that body perfectly. There is not even a one in million chance for you to take back your woman."

As though to beat despair into Hajime, as though to show that it was the truth, Freed informed Hajime using a matter-of-fact tone without getting worked-up at all.

However, in regard to that Hajime's face contained not even a single trace of agitation. Rather, he was giving back a fearless smile.

"The one who is calling me irregular is your side you know? Something like a worthless scenario that you guys prepared, I'm going to messed them up into pieces."

"…"

Hajime and Freed exchanged gazes wordlessly for a while. The Wind of killing intent began to blow suddenly. That atmosphere which licked at the skin like coiling snake was truly apt to be described as an explosive situation.

Hajime's finger touched Donner, at that moment, Freed opened his mouth as though to beat Hajime to the punch.

"Your previous question."

"Aa?"

"Your question of 'were you told to defeat us'——half is correct."

“Half?”

With his hand still touching Donner, Hajime narrowed his eyes questioningly in a state where he could draw his gun and shoot anytime.

Freed suddenly stood up from his cross-legged sitting posture and flapped his silver wings to float in the air, then he opened his mouth.

“My lord——Ehitorujue-sama granted me the command to let you pass without any obstruction when you arrived at this place. There is nothing more mortifying then the lost of my chance to strangle you to death with this hand, but it’s still inevitable for your life to meet its end.”

“Hou. Then? During that time you are going to face Shio and Thia, that’s what you mean?”

“Exactly. While you are receiving divine punishment from my lord, I’ll thoroughly torture to death the women who love you dearly.”

Right after Freed said that, the obelisk shined radiantly.

Hajime drew out Donner with the end of the talk. The fired bullet became a red flash and approached Freed’s forehead.

However,

GIIN!

A hard sound reverberated, that attack was completely blocked. When Hajime looked, it was as though the bullet crashed into an invisible wall in front of Freed, the bullet flattened and stopped midair.

“If you think that my space magic is the same like before than that’s a great mistake.”

It appeared Freed had laid out a protective wall of space isolator around himself beforehand. From how Hajime’s magic eye stone was unable to detect the wall, then it was just like Freed said, his level in space magic had increased.

At that moment where Hajime’s first attack was blocked and a bit of time was bought, the obelisk that was emitting strong radiance shined explosively.

The white light completely dyed their field of vision. But, Hajime’s magic eye stone that wasn’t affected by the amount of light accurately caught what kind of phenomenon this was.

Before long, the light settled down, and what flew into their cleared up field of vision was the scenery of a great swarm of monsters clamoring together to the degree that no empty space could be seen. Their number was definitely in four digits. Roughly there might be around two thousand monsters.

From each and every single monster, they could feel the strength at the level of the monster at the lowest level of the abyss *at the very least*. There were also monsters that they had encountered before, but based on their appearance every single one had been evolved.

A black wolf with four reddish black eyes had its head increased by two like a watchdog of hell. A black panther with tentacles seemed to be combined with a chimera, it had draconic claws and snake tail

while the air at its surrounding was flickering. A monster with horse head Ahatd had further two arms added, and it was also further enveloped in reddish black magic power that seemed to be ‘Vajra’.

Especially the dragon flock that covered the sky, every single one appeared to possess strength at the same level with the white dragon that they faced at Guryuen Grand Volcano.

And then, the leader of that dragon flock, the white dragon that was also the partner of Freed, it was emitting an absurd pressure that easily surpassed all the monsters. Its physique was already nearly twenty meters big Its pure white scales were giving off the radiance of steel. The wings on its back increased to two pairs of four wings, each time it breathed pure white spark was surging from its mouth.

The scar on its chest was exposed with ferocious dignity. Its magnificent body was shining brilliantly and emitted divinity. A white dragon that came out in legend——or perhaps it should be called as a white colored holy dragon, a white divine dragon. In any case, it appeared to have a strength that easily surpassed the divine beast leviathan that they encountered just now.

Hajime and others were surrounded by a few hundred, a few thousand monsters of abnormal level, the fierce killing intent was showered on them from all direction, amidst that Freed was floating calmly right at the side of the white divine dragon with his silver wings flapping.

“Now, Nagumo Hajime. You can leave behind the women who love you dearly in this despair and progress ahead.”

Hajime directed a scorning smile toward Freed who elaborated this disgusting plan where Hajime had to leave behind Shia and Tio among this swarm in order to meet her beloved woman.

“Are you idiot? Just why do I have to listen to what you are saying? I can just instant-killed all of you before going forward brazenly.”

There was no need to purposefully divide their battle strength in front of the enemy. Hajime who talked that doing this with all three of them was faster was given a cold gaze by Freed.

And then, he proclaimed.

“No, you are going to go ahead. To head toward despair, alone by yourself.”

“Hah, saying whatever you like——!?”

Instantly a golden light poured down toward Hajime. The ‘angel’s ladder’ that suddenly appeared from the gap of the clouds really resembled the torrent of light that once captured Yue.

“Hajime-san!”

“Goshujin-sama-“

Shia and Tio, perhaps remembering that time they reached out their hand toward Hajime with a slightly uneasy voice. As expected, their hand was repelled away.

Hajime was going to take out his pile bunker to show that the same trick wouldn’t work the second time. However, Freed opened his mouth faster than that.

“That light was a light of teleportation. It will lead toward the location of your ‘beloved’.”

Hearing that stopped Hajime's hand for an instant. Indeed, the light that was pouring down right now didn't have a harming effect at him for even a bit, it felt like it was connected with a space somewhere.

But, Hajime immediately rethought his thinking and he was going to destroy the light torrent. He could just exterminate Freed and the monsters together with Shia and Tio, then go to Yue altogether. As expected, he was unwilling to leave behind just the two of them in this space.

But, the one who stopped such Hajime was no other than Shia and Tio.

"Hajime-san, please go ahead."

"Truly. It's an invitation that art hard to come by. Just the two of us art enough to take care of this side."

Hajime's eyes widened slightly. But the two added more words without being concerned of that.

"Leave this place to us and go ahead! I wanted to try saying that sentence at least once desu."

"Doon't worry, we art going to follow immediately after finishing here. Fufufu."

Hajime's face turned exasperated toward the rabbit and the no good dragon who sent him a wink while raising their death flag daringly. And then, he also sensed how they were seriously telling him to go ahead even while joking around.

That was a scolding toward him not to let go of the chance to arrive at Yue's location even if it was at a stage that the opponent prepared, it was also a resolve to not let any other to become hindrance at his battle against Ehito, it was also their faith that if it was Hajime then he would surely rescue Yue without fail, and it was also the expression of their confidence that if it was the two of them then they would make it somehow against a situation of just this level.

Hajime's figure was fading. He was being transferred to another different place. Although Hajime was slightly hesitant, he directed a gaze that was filled with his utmost trust at the resolved Shia and Tio and strongly nodded.

In actuality, it was outside of their expectation for the inside of [Holy Precincts] to have this many varied spaces contained inside it. They had the compass, so they didn't get lost in searching Yue's whereabouts. But, if for example, Ehito rearranged the spaces' configuration like a block game or if he could teleport without limitation, then there was the risk that this would become an endless chase.

In that aspect, it was honestly painful when the degraded version crystal key broke when they entered the [Holy Precincts]. In the worst case, there would be a need for Hajime to recycle the very small amount of god crystal he used for his other artifact to create a new degraded crystal key, so if the other side was giving him the invitation then it was an unexpected windfall for him.

Shia and Tio also understood about that, for that reason they proposed this dispersion of battle strength that could be said as a bad move.

"Got it. Shia, Tio…"

"Yes desu."

"Yes."

Just before Hajime was teleported, he made a fierce smile and left behind his words to the two in exchange for leaving from here.

“No need to hold back. Kill them all…in a way fitting as my women.”

“Yes, siiir desuu!”

“Fufu, leave it to us!”

Shia and Tio were also returning a smile that looked like a wild beast at Hajime.

At that moment, the light dispersed and along with it, Hajime’s figure vanished.

The two who were left behind——Shia was tapping her war hammer Vire Doryukken on her shoulder while glaring over the monsters around them, while Tio was cracking her neck audibly with a somehow bewitching smile on her face.

“Now then, it seemed that you said something about torturing us to death or something but…”

“Instead, the one who wouldst be made sport to death art thou, just like all those time before, and from here on too. Thou art truly a man without any learning capability.”

While being surrounded by several hundred, several thousand monsters of absurd level, far from having their calm expression crumbling, Shia and Tio were instead giving Freed a gaze as though they were looking at an idiot. Freed narrowed his eyes to that.

“Don’t think that I am the same like the me before this. This power that I was bestowed by my lord——putting aside that monster, there is no doubt that I have surpassed the likes of you two. Prepare yourself. The bitterness of being looked down, I’ll return it completely, no, I’ll return it by several folds to the two of you. The two of you can meet your end while yelling that man’s name with your death cry.”

“Enough with the tedious talk desu. Crushed, beaten up, punched, exploded, splattered, they are all similar, but I’ll let you chose the method that you preferred to be massacred with.”

“So this is what art called as big talk. Let me taught thou this thing called as the difference in status.”

Both sides sent each other caustic words.

A beat.

Killing intent burst out from the whole body of each of them.

And then,

“Kill them-!”

“I’ll kill you to death desu-!”

“Be annihilated-!”

The spark of battle was lit up.

Rain of aurora rained down from the sky, immense blazes were spat out from three-headed wolves, violent shockwave surged from the six-armed horse-heads, silver flash and a large amount of feathers rushed from the front.

Lethal attacks from all directions. The field of vision of Shia and Tio were completely covered with death.

But,

“Tio-san, two steps to the right, drop a little then go three steps ahead desu.”

“Right, that helped.”

Tio moved almost reflexively following Shia’s murmur. Aurora poured down at the spot where she was at just a moment before, furthermore when Tio lowered his altitude shockwave passed through above, and when she stepped forward she evaded silver feathers in return.

At the same time, Shia was also similarly taking steps as though she was dancing in midair. She slipped through the gaps of the attacks as though it was actually the attacks that were avoiding Shia.

The place where Shia moved at, and then, the place where Tio moved at following Shia’s instruction, those places were places with the thinnest concentration of attack.

The derivation of characteristic magic ‘Future Sight’, the ‘Revelation Sight’——an ability that could automatically take a peek at the future a few seconds ahead. Shia predicted the trajectory of attack with this ability and calculated the safe spot swiftly.

Nevertheless, it was not an exaggeration to say that the density of the attacks sent to them was like a wall. Even if they moved to the place where it was relatively harder to be hit, that didn’t mean that they were unharmed.

Therefore,

“URYAAAAAAAA-!!”

“Just this much-!”

Shia took out from the empty air a kendama made from adamantium and coated with sealing stone, and then she launched it instantly overhead. Vire Doryukken struck the metal ball and a thunderous sound roared, at the same time the kendama was rising to the sky with a violent momentum like a rocket flying to space.

The surface that was coated with sealing stone displayed its trait fully and reduced the intensity of the rain of aurora. Next, the aurora rain was snapped away to far beyond due to the kendama’s pure destructive force.

And then, for a brief time, the gray dragon that was defenseless due to firing the aurora could only get startled funnily by the approaching metallic mass from below. At the next moment, *mekyo!* such graphic sound resounded and while the kendama was sinking into its stomach, the dragon was further blown away to the sky.

The gray dragon got the bones in its whole body got pulverized and disappeared at beyond the sky. An instant later Shia then appeared at the place where that dragon was at as though in replacement, without stopping she used the chain to swing around the kendama, giving rise to a whirlwind that beaten to death the surrounding gray dragons.

Freed slightly narrowed his eyes toward such Shia, but when he directed his gaze at Tio who was left behind, there he could see the figure of Tio who was crossing her arms while getting swallowed by the impact of light and blaze.

Although in that spot the attack was relatively fewer, but she was still getting hit by attacks at the amount that might be enough to inflict lethal wound considering the level of the power of the attacks.

However,

“That appearance…”

“Hmph, compared to Goshujin-sama’s reward, this level of pain art too lukewarm.”

Tio was floating unmoving with a fearless smile while saying such sentence. Her appearance was completely changed compared to her appearance just a moment before.

First of all, the color of her skin was different. Her beautiful skin that was like porcelain was now covered with jet black color, only her golden eyes were piercingly shining in there. Looking carefully, Freed noticed that the source of the jet black color was from dragon scales on her skin.

It was the derivative skill ‘Partial Dragonification’ from characteristic magic ‘Dragonification’. The dragon scale that originally could only came out in Tio’s black dragon form was now being put on like a chainmail so that it wouldn’t obstruct the movement of her small human form. Furthermore, using ‘Dragon Scale Hardening’ that increased the hardness of the scale in respond to the magic power consumption, Tio completely endured all the attacks solidly.

Of course, if Tio was actually hit by all the attacks then the damage would pass through, but with Shia’s help the number of attacks that she got hit with decreased remarkably, she would have no trouble at all if she only got hit by one or two of each variation of attack.

By the way, the reason Tio didn’t turn into dragon completely was purely because her human form was more maneuverable and it was also harder to hit her because she was a smaller target like this. Although her physical strength dropped compared with the state of complete dragonification, she had already mastered the ‘Partial Dragonification’ to the degree that there was not that much difference in defensive capability aspect, so this state was convenient for her in this case.

If this technique was to be given a name then this would be composite dragonification and metamorphosis magic——the ‘Dragon Scale Armor’.

“A return gift!”

The instant a pause appeared between the attacks, Tio turned into a counterattack. She stretched both her hands horizontally and instantly focused tremendous magic power, at the next instant she fired breath attack from the tips of both her hands like a laser that had been compressed to the limit.

The right and left breath attacks that were fired straight like black string easily pierced the monsters at their line of fire. Even the horse head that looked excellent in defensive power was also no exception. This attack of Tio had been refined until its might heightened by that much.

In addition, that was not the end of it. Tio spread wide her hands horizontally and then she twirled on the spot.

Naturally, the super thin breaths that pierced and bisected everything were matching Tio's movement and trampled the battlefield, mowing down the monsters.

Her clothing that looked like Japanese clothes gently fluttered along with her long beautiful hair, exhibiting elegance like in a dance in this battlefield. The blood spray scattered everywhere by the bisected monsters that were falling to the ground colored Tio's surrounding like a blizzard of falling sakura petals.

"Impudent…Uranos. The disgrace that you once received, clear it up right here!"

Freed who frowned from looking at Tio's figure gave instruction at the white divine dragon(Uranos) beside him. Uranos's reddish black eyes shined in joy.

GOGAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!

Uranos raised an extremely loud roar.

It didn't fire aurora as breath attack, it was merely roaring, but just with that space itself trembled, a shockwave of sound was generated. Normal people would have their body pulverized just from that, and even if they endured it a primitive terror would well up and they might be driven mad, a violent howl.

Truly a roar of a divine dragon.

Due to that, even the monsters who should be its ally couldn't help but get paralyzed, the attacks that were raining down like storm also got completely dispersed.

Although, it was by no meant that Tio was helped just because of that.

"Nuoo!?"

While her whole body got strongly struck by the shockwave, combined with the lightness of her small human body caused Tio to get blown away. She fell toward the ground like a meteor. Looking carefully, there were few small shining fragments scattered at the trajectory her body passed through. Although it was only a few, but Tio's prided dragon scales were smashed, just from a single roar.

Tio impacted the ground like that without being able to kill her momentum. *BAM* Tremor hit the ground and a small crater was created on the floating island, Tio's figure got concealed by the rolling up dust.

There, a merciless pursuit attack was fired.

GOAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!

The world was dyed by white radiance, by the breath of the Uranos——by aurora.

Even the word tremendous couldn't represent a fragment of that attack's might. The absurd torrent of light caused the space itself to creak, just its after-wave gouged out the ground of the floating island.

And then, at the place that got hit directly…the aurora pierced until far below——it broke through the bottom of the floating island and pierced until the far beyond.

Yes, the aurora pierced through the ground of the floating island that had the diameter of ten-odd kilometers until it came out on the other side. The sea of clouds spreading under the island had a hole opened there like the eye of a typhoon that dispersed in a radial shape.

A terrifying might. It was just like the light of divine punishment. Everything that stood on its way would be completely destroyed without any discrimination by that breath of devastation.

Before long, the flash that dyed the world was disappearing as though melting into air.

"Tio-san-!"

Tio was swallowed by the aurora, no, any possibility other than Tio got destroyed altogether with the ground leaving not even dust behind was unthinkable from witnessing this spectacle, seeing that caused Shia to spontaneously called Tio's name with shrieking voice.

While beating to death several gray dragons with her kendama, Shia focused her eyes at the spot where Tio got blown away at, but she could only see a hole in the ground that was completely empty of any living thing and she couldn't discover Tio's figure.

"Hmph, perhaps that's overdoing it. Despite my intention to torture her to death, but to be annihilated with one attack…the situation just cannot go as I hoped for."

"There is no way such thing is——!?"

Freed glared at below looking not amused.

Shia raged to deny those words.

And then, Shia changed the Vire Doryukken into bombing mode and aimed at Freed…at that moment, the figure of herself getting slashed into pieces by countless large swords was reflected in her brain. It was a death prediction from her characteristic magic 'Future Sight'.

A chill rushed through her whole body instantly, her voice got caught in her throat while she twisted her body half-forcefully. From the superb timing of the attack's instant, it brought to Shia's intention that this was an attack that leaped through space——an attack that couldn't be dodged perfectly based on Shia's experience.

In an instant, the space around Shia was undulating, from there large swords were thrusting out in a flash.

"——"

While raising a wordless scream, Shia's legs and arms cartwheeled midair in order to at least avoid a fatal wound, and then four large swords grazed her and blood sprayed up.

Another large sword approached her head, she avoided that by turning her head and the blade grazed her cheek, two large swords approached her neck from left and right, she blocked one with her Vire Doryukken, and used the chain connected to the kendama to block the other one.

She pulled the trigger of Vire Doryukken next and used the fierce recoil to rotate like a spinning wheel, three blades rushed at her as though blocking her escape path, but she barely evaded them even while her shoulders got gouged.

And then, even while bearing injury, Shia somehow succeeded to get away from her future of death and put her feet on air using 'Air Force'. At the same time, the apostles with *platinum* hair flew out from the undulating space with their wings flapping, their twin swords launching severe slashes at Shia.

"KuUUUU-"

Vertical bisecting attack using two large swords at the same time. Shia blocked that attack using the handle of Vire Doryukken, but she was pushed toward the ground by immense pressure and impact where the weapons of both sides were locked with each other.

Amidst the sparks scattered by the large swords and the war hammer, Shia fell with fierce momentum toward the ground, the platinum apostle who wielded that bizarre strength from really close range then opened her mouth at Shia.

"The first apostle Erst. Judgment to god's enemy."

Immediately after, the large swords shined in *platinum* light. Right after that power swelled up explosively into a torrent. The apostle that introduced herself as Erst swung out her twin swords in one breath then.

"Gua!?"

Shia's body was struck fiercely due to the impact, she fell on the ground like that. *BAM* Fierce shockwave radiated loudly and a crater was created, dust rolled up. It was like a reproduction of Tio's fall before this.

Sure enough, five platinum flashes aimed for Shia at the bottom of the crater, all of them were fired simultaneously.

"The second apostle Zweit. Judgment to god's enemy."

"The third apostle Dritte. Judgment to god's enemy."

"The fourth apostle Vierte. Judgment to god's enemy."

"The fifth apostle Funfte. Judgment to god's enemy."

The four apostles that appeared unnoticed were conducting their introduction proclamation while launching their bombing. Even if the color of their magic power light was different, but it only stood to reason that the light that an apostle launched must have disintegration ability.

Thinking of the apostle's explosive power that struck Shia into the ground, the spec of the platinum apostles were obviously above even the normal apostle, from that it could be easily imagined that their bombing would be something absurd too.

Shia immediately pulled her kendama close to use it as shield replacement, but in the end would it make it in time or not… Similar with Tio, it seemed that Shia was also going to vanish inside the light.

But, at that time,

Gigantic black flash that was fired from somewhere approached the apostles, furthermore *hyun* a sound of cutting wind resounded and something like a rope rushed inside the dust cloud and entangled around Shia's body, it then extracted Shia from that spot in one go.

The platinum apostles flapped their platinum wings and evaded the black flash. At the same time, the ground where Shia was just at before she got pulled was pierced by the platinum bombardment. The ground after the dust got swept away had been gouged really deeply, even though the attack didn't pierce until the bottom of the island but the bottom of the hole couldn't be seen from above. As expected, the might of these apostles had wide difference compared to the normal apostle.

"Shia, art thou safe?"

"Tio-san!"

Shia who was entangled in black rope——or more accurately in black whip was pulled up and received into an embrace of Tio, who although she was in a sooty state here and there with various sizes of wound all over her body, her expression still looked comparatively fine.

Shia spontaneously sighed in relieve, to that Tio grinned widely while the corner of her mouth was holding a test tube container.

And then, Tio moved her lips and tilted the test tube container, she drained up the content in one go before *puih* she spat away the container also with a wild gesture, she then released Shia from her black whip.

"…So you escaped. What a toughness that is as expected from that man's woman. How annoying."

The expression of Freed's eyes warped while he spouted out abusive language.

"Well, I thought I was going to die for a bit there though. For the large shield created by Goshujin-sama to be pulverized, although it couldn't use 'Vajra' or 'Transmutation'…thou have really evolved this dragon of thy."

It appeared in that instant when the aurora poured down, Tio summoned a large shield artifact from her 'Treasure Warehouse II' and she barely escaped at the slight time it took until the shield got pulverized. In other words, the protection of Tio's Dragon Scale Armor got overtaken only by the after wave and she bore this much damage from that. As expected, the aurora of the Uranos was something absurd.

"Hmph, is it really okay for you to act composed? The aurora of Uranos who has reached the territory of a divine dragon is increased not only in its might. Its additional ability to obstruct healing is also evolved. It obstructed even the regeneration magic. On top of that, it is making the wound to worsen further

with the passage of time. Although you got hit only by the after wave, if you bore that much wound, it won't take that long for the effect to gnaw at your body until you die you know?"

"Is that so? All these monsters, and then these platinum apostles, these art quite troublesome. …Well, normally that's how it would be."

"What?"

Ahead of the gaze of Freed who was feeling dubious at Tio's way of talking, Tio was wrapped in the light of magic power. That was the sign that regeneration magic was being used. As though to show that, the wounds that Tio bore were being healed one after another.

Freed was gazing in astonishment while raising his voice from being unable to endure his question.

"Ridiculous…the invasion of the aurora is being nullified? Impossible-"

"The ridiculous one art thou. Just how many times do you think Goshujin-sama hath been showered by that light. Obviously something like one or two countermeasure would be created for that."

"…Don't tell me, is it the liquid just now?"

Tio shrugged at Freed's question. It seemed that was the correct answer.

Anti-aurora magic medicine 'Fix It J'——the ability to obstruct healing that was included in the magic power of the aurora, Hajime who understood that it came from the magic factor with opposing nature against the magic power contained in the aurora made this magic medicine. Hajime enchanted magic that would negate the effect of the aurora into powder of metal that didn't have bad effect to the human body to make this medicine.

It had been proven by the 'God Water' that it was possible to forcefully heal the affected wound using something with healing power that surpassed the obstructing effect. And so, if the obstructing effect was weakened by this 'Fix It J', even if the effect had been evolved but the wound could be healed enough using regeneration magic.

Freed showed an irritated expression that the additional effect of the aurora didn't show result. Even the Uranos at his side was making growling sound from its throat in dissatisfaction.

But, at that time,

"-, Tio-san-"

"Yes-"

Suddenly, Shia raised a voice of warning, both of them immediately leaped away from their spot.

After that, platinum flash rushed through.

"Freed-sama. These people are that irregular's comrade. Please don't let your guard down."

"Acknowledged."

Erst was giving a warning to Freed using polite language. It seemed that before they knew it the status between the Freed and the apostles had been reversed. Most likely it was because the transformation that happened with Freed, but right now there wasn't any free time to know the detail.

The platinum apostles flew out simultaneously focusing at Shia.

"We will hand down the judgment at that rabbit person first. Is that fine?"

"Yeah. I'll leave that one to you. I too want to judge that dragon woman, the one who made fool of me once."

Erst nodded briskly at Freed's words, she then flapped her platinum wings in order to deal with Shia herself and flew away.

When Shia guessed that all the apostles were designating her as their target, she raised a ferocious war cry while forcefully blowing away the large sword that was swung down at her by the second apostle Zweit along with the holder.

"Bring it on desu-! Just try it if you think that you can desuu!"

Immediately after, faint blue magic power burst out from Shia. Using the derivative skill of magic power operation, 'Body Strengthening', and then also the further derivation skill 'Impact Conversion Increase III', Shia's body capability was explosively raised up.

And then, she rotated the kendama in high speed using only snapping motion of the wrist of the hand holding the chain, swinging around the super heavy kendama like a flail.

The gigantic metal mass was rotating in circle with abnormal speed and became like a streak of light.

There, the third apostle Dritte came attacking right from the front. Shia pulled the trigger of Vire Doryukken and fired out bursting slug bullet to check Dritte in place.

Dritte evaded that like it was only natural and kept advancing. But, Shia read ahead the path that she took and launched the kendama that looked like it would snap away anytime with superb timing. The liberated red kendama that looked like a wild beast made Dritte unable to take evasive action…was how it looked like, but the moment she was almost hit, Dritte's figure vanished.

And then, at the next moment, she materialized right at Shia's side. Furthermore, unnoticed the fourth apostle Vierte from behind and the fifth apostle Funfte from below were approaching, they slashed their twin large swords as though to block Shia's place to escape.

"ts, youu-"

Shia entrusted Vire Doryukken to her physical strength and swept it horizontally, she repelled away the large swords of the two apostles while dodging the last sword with a somersault.

But, it seemed that this time it was the apostles who read ahead of her movement, Zweit who was sent flying before this was already slashing her large sword in a timing that couldn't be dodged.

Inside the flow of time that felt strangely slow, the eyes of the inhuman apostle and Shia's eyes crossed with each other. No emotion or anything could be seen there, but vaguely Shia could feel something like

triumph “Even if you can see the future, you cannot avoid this right?”, surely it wasn’t just in her imagination.

Shia wasn’t even agitated or impatient, she returned back a straight clear gaze. Shia didn’t blink even once while capturing the rapidly approaching blade that left behind trail of platinum light in her field of vision.

A predicament of this level was nothing to speak of. Don’t think that the one who obtains new power is just you! Shia proclaimed that implicitly. And then, just when she was about to use that new power…a black whip stretched out smoothly and entangled the wrist of the apostle before her eyes.

(Oh my, I don’t even need to use it. As expected from Tio-san. That’s a superb follow-up desu!)

Shia who whispered that in her heart changed her plan. While a smile formed at the corner of her lips, Vire Doryukken leaped up from below.

The slowing world returned to its original speed.

Right after that, the arm of Zweit was tugged away and the trajectory of her large sword slipped away from Shia’s body. At the same time, the war hammer repelled away the second sword from below at the opposite side while rising up with powerful speed.

GOGYA!

Such graphic sound resounded, Vire Doryukken that hit the jaw of Zweit blown her away to the sky above as though rocket propulsion was carrying her away.

“Disappear.”

Toward Shia who was just lifting up Vire Doryukken, a cold voice——Erst’s proclamation came at the same time with a platinum flash that attacked Shia.

Shia was unable to evade due to an instant of her body stiffening after launching her attack.

But, as expected the color of anxiety was nonexistence in her expression.

Right after that, Zweit who was blown away just now was returning. That wasn’t because Shia’s blow wasn’t effective and she came to attack once more. The black whip that Tio controlled was still connected to her hand, therefore she was now being pulled back forcefully, toward the line of fire of the platinum light.

“——!”

Erst and the pulled back Zweit reflexively gazed in astonishment, at the next moment, Erst’s bombing was defended by Zweit’s own platinum wings.

And then, Zweit shook off the black whip entangling her wrist and got out of the line of fire in hurry.

This was happening in less than a second.

But, that was enough.

“SEYAAA!!”

A yell exploded.

Shia's Vire Doryukken caught the platinum flash in a full swing. A tremendous shockwave was generated, at the same time, the surface that was coated with sealing stone dispersed the disintegration ability along with the flash.

And then, the apostles who attempted to attack Shia without any interval were held back by Tio's breath attack, while Tio's body slipped in to become shield using her dragon scale against the opponent that couldn't be held back. Although the black dragon scale of the dragon race that boasted supreme hardness was disintegrated, coupled with its unparalleled endurance it somehow pulled through with only faint wound created by the platinum magic power.

"Those arts quiet the cooperation, but it's troubling for thou to then look down on our cooperation!"

Tio opened her mouth. At the tip of her mouth, magic power was focusing with fierce momentum. Dritte who was looking at that across the arm covered with dragon scale that blocked her large sword immediately leaped away. The compressed breath pierced that vacated spot.

Naturally, Shia and Tio became standing back to back.

"Tio-san, thank you very much. It's truly amazing that you can breakthrough to here."

"Well, if I charged with the resolve to be damaged, then as long as it's not against that white dragon I am unstoppable."

Yes, Tio saw Shia who was receiving a concentrated attack from the apostles, and then she resolved to receive damage from Freed and the monsters' attack while cutting across the storm of attacks to come at Shia's side.

"But, Tio-san, your wound…"

"Shia. It will be okay with this. Just so thou know, there is this."

"…Aa, I see desu."

Shia and Tio talked back to back with a small voice that could reach other.

During that time, with Erst at the front as the starting point, the apostles were surrounding the two. Beside Erst, Freed finally arrived accompanied with his Uranos.

"Sorry. It seems that dragon woman is not really bothered by damage. I misread the way she fights a little."

"No, we too were unable to finish off Shia Hauria. It appears that she has further increased her fighting strength in these few days. …What an unbelievable thing."

It seemed that the two of them were revising their analysis of Shia and Tio.

"Then, we will pull away Shia Hauria away and exterminate her."

"Aa. Even the dragon race won't be able to maintain that kind of reckless fighting for long but, I too will use my full strength here."

Shia and Tio, and then Freed and Erst, each side exchanged words with each other. The wind of tension blew once more.

And then…

“Exterminating god’s enemy.”

“Receive your judgment, foolish people.”

Erst swung her twin large swords, while Freed distorted the space at the tip of his stretched out hand.

At the same time,

“I’m going-, ——’Level IV-‘!!”

“Come, mine retainer, ——’Dragon Army Summoning’!!”

Shia’s body reinforcement rose by a level, the light magic power enveloping her further increased in radiance. Along with Tio’s proclamation, a hundred armed black dragons materialized from the ‘magic orbs’ that were scattered in the battlefield unnoticed by anyone.

Right now, the gong of the second round was sounded.